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*The Truth and Consistency of Divine Revelation ;
with some Remarks on the contrary extremes
of Infidelity and Enthusiasm,*

IN

EIGHT DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT ST. MARY'S,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXI.

AT

THE LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

BY

JOHN BIDLAKE, D. D.

OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

CHAPLAIN TO THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES THE PRINCE
OF WALES AND DUKE OF CLARENCE.

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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM WYNDHAM,
BARON GRENVILLE,
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES
ARE DEDICATED
WITH THE MOST PROFOUND RESPECT
BY
HIS LORDSHIP'S
OBLIGED AND VERY OBEDIENT
HUMBLE SERVANT,

JOHN BIDLAKE,

P R E F A C E.

IN the following Discourses the Author has endeavoured, as in former volumes of Sermons which he has had occasion to publish, to render them as generally useful as possible. He has not laboured to be abstruse, nor does he profess to claim the praise of originality; being better satisfied to produce arguments, however obvious, which may be serviceable to the cause of true religion.

When we consider how much has been written by the early apologists for Christianity; when we reflect on the numerous controversies which have called forth the abilities and stimulated the exertions of the most profound inquirers into subjects of divinity; we cannot hope for much novelty at the present time. Yet perhaps a few observations may be found in this volume, which may place the subjects under discussion in a light somewhat different

from that in which they have been generally viewed.

On those particulars which create a difference of opinion among Christians, the Author has endeavoured to express himself, so as to give as little offence as possible. He trusts that his sentiments are unprejudiced, and wishes to respect all who may differ from him on conscientious motives. The censures which may be found in these Discourses are not designed for any particular denomination of Christians ; they apply only to the presumptuous and self-sufficient, to whatever communion they may belong. While he laments the existence of schism, he is the friend of universal toleration ; and while he condemns the arrogance of the illiterate, he cannot but respect talents and knowledge, wherever they may be found. But while the Church is aspersed by illiberality, however painful controversy may be, its true friends must stand forward in its defence ; and while a spirit exists which is intolerant and uncharitable, and which would prove subversive of sound learning and dignified religion, caution cannot be too warmly or too frequently recommended.

For any defects which may appear in the execution of the following work, the Author has to plead, that he has been afflicted with severe illness; and soon after the commencement of these Lectures he was incapacitated from the use of books, and consequently from the correction of his own pages; and for the delivery of some he was indebted to the kind assistance of friends.

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EXTRACT
FROM
THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT
OF THE LATE
REV. JOHN BAMPTON,
CANON OF SALISBURY.

—— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and
“ Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars
“ of the University of Oxford for ever, to have and
“ to hold all and singular the said Lands or Estates
“ upon trust, and to the intents and purposes herein-
“ after mentioned ; that is to say, I will and appoint
“ that the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ox-
“ ford for the time being shall take and receive all
“ the rents, issues, and profits thereof, and (after all
“ taxes, reparations, and necessary deductions made)
“ that he pay all the remainder to the endowment
“ of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be esta-
“ blished for ever in the said University, and to be
“ performed in the manner following :

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first Tues-
“ day in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen

“ by the Heads of Colleges only, and by no others,
 “ in the room adjoining to the Printing-House,
 “ between the hours of ten in the morning and
 “ two in the afternoon, to preach eight Divinity
 “ Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St.
 “ Mary’s in Oxford, between the commencement
 “ of the last month in Lent Term, and the end of
 “ the third week in Act Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Di-
 “ vinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon
 “ either of the following Subjects—to confirm and
 “ establish the Christian Faith, and to confute all
 “ heretics and schismatics—upon the divine au-
 “ thority of the holy Scriptures—upon the autho-
 “ rity of the writings of the primitive Fathers, as
 “ to the faith and practice of the primitive Church
 “ —upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour
 “ Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy
 “ Ghost—upon the Articles of the Christian Faith,
 “ as comprehended in the Apostles’ and Nicene
 “ Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight
 “ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be always print-
 “ ed, within two months after they are preached,
 “ and one copy shall be given to the Chancellor
 “ of the University, and one copy to the Head of
 “ every College, and one copy to the Mayor of the
 “ city of Oxford, and one copy to be put into the
 “ Bodleian Library ; and the expence of printing
 “ them shall be paid out of the revenue of the
 “ Land or Estates given for establishing the Divi-

" nity Lecture Sermons ; and the Preacher shall
 " not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue, be-
 " fore they are printed.

" Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall
 " be qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Ser-
 " mons, unless he hath taken the Degree of Master
 " of Arts at least, in one of the two Universities
 " of Oxford or Cambridge; and that the same per-
 " son shall never preach the Divinity Lecture Ser-
 " mons twice."

NAMES OF LECTURERS, &c. ^a

1780. **JAMES BANDINEL, D. D.** of Jesus College;
Public Orator of the University. The author
first establishes "the truth and authority of the
"Scriptures;—for the authenticity of the his-
"tory being acknowledged, and the facts which
"are therein recorded being granted, the testi-
"mony of *miracles* and *prophecies*, joined to the
"excellence of the *doctrines*, is a clear and com-
"plete demonstration of our Saviour's divine
"commission." P. 37.
1781. **Timothy Neve, D. D.** Chaplain of Merton College.
"The great point which the author has prin-
"cipally attempted to illustrate is, that well
"known, but too much neglected truth, that
"Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and
"the Redeemer of mankind."
1782. **Robert Holmes, M. A.** Fellow of New College.
"On the prophecies and testimony of John the
"Baptist, and the parallel prophecies of Jesus
"Christ."
1783. **John Cobb, D. D.** Fellow of St. John's College.
The subjects discussed are; "An inquiry after
"happiness; natural religion; the Gospel; re-
"pentance; faith; professional faith; practical
"faith; the Christian's privileges."

^a This list is taken verbatim from Mr. Falconer's *Bampton Lectures* of last year.

1784. Joseph White, B. D. Fellow of Wadham College;
 "A comparison of Mahometism and Christianity in their history, their evidence, and their effects."
1785. Ralph Churton, M. A. Fellow of Brasenose College; "On the prophecies respecting the destruction of Jerusalem."
1786. George Croft, M. A. late Fellow of University College; "The use and abuse of reason; objections against inspiration considered; the authority of the ancient Fathers examined; on the conduct of the first Reformers; the charge of intolerance in the Church of England refuted; objections against the Liturgy answered; on the evils of separation; conjectural remarks upon prophecies to be fulfilled hereafter."
1787. William Hawkins, M. A. late Fellow of Pembroke College; "On Scripture Mysteries."
1788. Richard Shepherd, D. D. of Corpus Christi College; "The ground and credibility of the Christian Religion."
1789. Edward Tatham, D. D. of Lincoln College; "The Chart and Scale of Truth."
1790. Henry Kett, M. A. Fellow of Trinity College. "The object" of these Lectures is "to rectify the misrepresentations of Mr. Gibbon and Dr. Priestley with respect to the history of the primitive Church."

1791. Robert Morres, M. A. late Fellow of Brasenose College; On "faith in general; faith in divine testimony no subject of question; internal evidence of the Gospel; effects of faith; religious establishments; heresies."
1792. John Eveleigh, D. D. Provost of Oriel College. "I shall endeavour," says the learned author, "first to state regularly the substance of our religion from its earliest declarations in the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament to its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ; secondly, to give a sketch of the history of our religion from its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ to the present times, confining however this sketch, towards the conclusion, to the particular history of our own Church; thirdly, to state in a summary manner the arguments adducible in proof of the truth of our religion; and fourthly, to point out the general sources of objection against it."
1793. James Williamson, B. D. of Queen's College; "The truth, inspiration, authority and evidence of the Scriptures considered and defended."
1794. Thomas Wintle, B. D. of Pembroke College; "The expediency, prediction, and accomplishment of the Christian redemption illustrated."
1795. Daniel Veyrie, B. D. Fellow of Oriel College; "The doctrine of Atonement illustrated and defended."
1796. Robert Gray, M. A. late of St. Mary Hall; "On the principles upon which the reformation of the Church of England was established."

1797. William Finch, LL. D. late Fellow of St. John's College; "The objections of infidel historians and other writers against Christianity considered."
1798. Charles Henry Hall, B. D. late Student of Christ Church. "It is the purpose of these discourses to consider at large what is meant by the scriptural expression, 'fulness of time;' or, in other words, to point out the previous steps by which God Almighty gradually prepared the way for the introduction and promulgation of the Gospel." See the Preface.
1799. William Barrow, LL. D. of Queen's College. These Lectures contain "answers to some popular objections against the necessity or the credibility of the Christian revelation."
1800. George Richards, M. A. late Fellow of Oriel College; "The divine origin of prophecy illustrated and defended."
1801. George Stanley Faber, M. A. Fellow of Lincoln College; "Horæ Mosaicæ; or, a view of the Mosaic records with respect to their coincidence with profane antiquity, their internal credibility, and their connection with Christianity."
1802. George Frederic Nott, B. D. Fellow of All Souls College; "Religious Enthusiasm considered."
1803. John Farrer, M. A. of Queen's College; "On the mission and character of Christ, and on the Beatitudes."

1804. Richard Laurence, LL. D. of University College ;
 " An attempt to illustrate those Articles of the
 " Church of England which the Calvinists im-
 " properly consider as Calvinistical."
1805. Edward Nares, M. A. late Fellow of Merton Col-
 lege ; " A view of the evidences of Chris-
 " tianity at the close of the pretended age of
 " reason."
1806. John Browne, M. A. late Fellow of Corpus Christi
 College. In these Lectures the following prin-
 ciple is variously applied in the vindication of
 religion ; that " there has been an infancy of
 " the species, analogous to that of the indivi-
 " duals of whom it is composed, and that the
 " infancy of human nature required a different
 " mode of treatment from that which was suit-
 " able to its advanced state."
1807. Thomas Le Mesurier, M. A. late Fellow of New
 College ; " The nature and guilt of Schism con-
 " sidered with a particular reference to the prin-
 " ciples of the Reformation."
1808. John Penrose, M. A. of Corpus Christi College ;
 " An attempt to prove the truth of Christianity
 " from the wisdom displayed in its original esta-
 " blishment, and from the history of false and
 " corrupted systems of religion."
1809. J. B. S. Carwithen, M. A. of St. Mary Hall ; " A
 " view of the Brahminical religion in its confir-
 " mation of the truth of the sacred history, and
 " in its influence on the moral character."

1819. Thomas Falconer, M. A. of Corpus Christi College; "Certain principles in Evanfon's Diffonance of the four generally received Evangelists, &c. examined."
-

LECTURE I.

HEBREWS iii. 12.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

THIS exhortation of the Apostle is founded on an assurance that the scheme both of the Mosaic and Christian revelation is the work of God. *For every house, says he, is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end^a. And subsequently, in the words of the text, Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

^a Ver. 4, 5, and 6.

For though the origin of our faith be attested by a series of the most satisfactory proofs, there have been perverse, disputatious, and wicked characters in every period, who have denied and contradicted its authority.

But our church has not been established by the mere prescriptive ordinances of men ; it has been confirmed by rational inquiry and by solid argument : and, having been purified from the corruption of former ages, and triumphed over persecution, is at length fixed on such a broad and firm basis, that while it has the fullest *confidence and rejoicing of hope* in the divine power that supports it, it shrinks not from examination, but even challenges fair investigation. Our faith at the same time we trust is sincere ; but not arrogant. We would recommend to those who are in error or in doubt, who are seduced or *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, to endeavour to rectify their misapprehensions, and to confirm their opinions on the same rational principles ; *to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good*. But while we are thus disposed to promote liberal and honest inquiry, we must, we ought to discourage that presumptive and unyielding spirit which disdains instruction ; a spirit, which ever since the publication of

Christianity, has been too prevalent. There still exist tempers too proud to submit to conviction, and who entertain no deference for the sentiments of others. When the Saviour of mankind condescended to receive and to bless the little children which were brought unto him, how instructive is his observation! *Except*, said he to his disciples, *except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*^b.

That docile temper, which is necessary for the attainment of human wisdom, can alone qualify us to become wise unto salvation. From the earlier promulgation of the doctrine of Christ to the present hour, there have been opponents hostile to its sublime and affectionate scheme. Many who have possessed talents, the undeniable gift of God, in the proud consciousness of that possession have employed them in opposition to the giver. They have converted the light, dispensed to them by divine grace, into darkness. They have dared, according to the allusion of one of our best divines, to lift the arm once withered, but now strengthened, against him, who was graciously pleased to restore it^c. Thus, while

^a Matth. xviii. 3. ^c Sherlock:

they pretend to boast of natural reason, they forget how much intellectual light the world has derived from revelation. They judge alone of effects. The waters of Marah have been sweetened; but the murmuring children of disobedience are unthankful for the communicated sweetness. From period to period, adversaries of the truth have advanced in a guilty succession, and have tried to build an impious reputation on profaneness and rebellion to their God, and their Saviour. Has one been subdued? Another, equally proud, in defiance has entered the lists, assumed the armour of the vanquished, or tried a new mode of assault. Under the direction however of a divine Providence, and by the aid of reason and of human learning, truth has still triumphed; and we confidently trust it will still remain secure, by whatever foes it may be attacked, by whatever species of warfare it may be assailed.

In such a state of the Church, left by the appointment of God, but doubtless under the influence of his holy Spirit, to the co-operative powers of man, the necessity of successive and vigilant defenders must be obvious. God having done all for his vineyard, which his infinite wisdom thinks fit, leaves it to be fenced

and to be cultivated by human means. The utility therefore of institutions similar to this Lecture must be apparent ; and the pious intention of the Founder will deserve the applause and reverence of posterity ; while the extensive field allowed for discussion renders it of more permanent advantage. As new forms of objection are tried, they may meet ready answers, and be confuted before their baneful effects be spread to any extent. Arguments, which have no novelty in themselves, may acquire new spirit by transfusion through several minds ; and what one defender may not elucidate, another may render more luminous or more perspicuous. We have been told on the highest authority, that *it needs must be that offences will come*. We have been warned against perpetual enemies and heresies. While such exist, the friends of the church of Christ must employ every effort ; they must be ever watchful ; they must be always clothed in the *whole armour of God, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit*^d, ready to defend, to combat and to vanquish.

But let us not flatter the adversaries of truth

^d Ephes. vi.

with admitting that their opinions are new ; for it will be found that they have as little of novelty as of force. In fact, the tenets of modern unbelievers are the mere echoes of objections, long since advanced, and long since silenced. It is remarkable, that the opponents of a divine revelation have never been enabled to offer demonstration of any facts or arguments which militate against it. Their objections are all of a negative character, and serve rather to evince their own malice or pertinacity, than to weaken the evidences of religion.

Since then all the objections of infidels are of this negative quality, in the following discourses I propose to shew ; that the evidences of revealed religion are capable of a very high degree of demonstration ; that the scheme of divine revelation is grand, comprehensive, consistent and harmonious in its general design ; agreeable to the attributes of the Deity, and to the analogies of his œconomy in his natural and moral world. In the course of this plan I shall take occasion to answer some charges of inconsistency, which are urged against the Clergy, by the two opposite characters of unbelievers and fanatics.

It must be obvious that such a design opens

a very extensive field of discussion. But it will be pursued only with a reference to our limits ; and although the topics of each discourse will be varied, yet it is to be hoped they will consistently and uniformly tend to the same object.

Since every mode of defence has long been successfully employed by the able and ingenious, novelty can scarcely be expected. To bring some arguments into a conspicuous light, to extract or to concentrate, is all which can be hoped ; and therefore is all to which any pretensions can be made.

It seems to be permitted by divine Providence, that error should be opposed to truth. Perhaps the latter may be elicited and confirmed by the same means which are successful in human discovery. Its lustre does not indeed burst on us with irresistible power, but sheds on us a milder light, better adapted to our capacity, and so illuminating objects, that they are at once rendered accessible and distinct. Lamentable, however, is the reflection, that though the invitations of God and a Redeemer to mankind are altogether engaging and conciliatory ; that though they propose nothing which can give offence to the rational inquirer ; that though they are calculated to

improve the moral state, and, it should seem, to win the affections of the world; yet they have ever found bitter and prejudiced enemies; enemies whose animosity seems even to be sharpened by the benign character of the doctrines of Christianity. This animosity is so inflammatory and obstinate, that no lenient application avails. Charity cannot appease it. Love cannot win it. Mercy is sullenly rejected because gratuitously offered; and there are even men who are willing to perish without aid, rather than accept the divine arm that is stretched out to save them. It is impossible that Christianity can give offence on any other account than its opposition to the selfish and depraved passions of mankind. It cannot therefore be rejected but through some infatuation, some attachment to error, some unconquerable prejudice or insensibility.

Let me then be permitted to offer some remarks on the several characters and motives of unbelievers. For if it be well ascertained that the designs and principles of the infidel, however candid in appearance, are really unfair and malignant, their arguments will lose much of the force with which they are offered, and their influence will be considerably diminished. While the unsuspecting are taught

to believe that infidelity displays a spirit of liberality and sentimental freedom, and even of zeal for the good of mankind, they are fascinated by these false pretences. But let the mask be withdrawn; let it be proved, that the wisdom of man is indeed foolishness, that the design of the infidel is not to lead us to liberty and happiness, but, on the contrary, that his arguments have a tendency to fill the mind with gloom, distrust, and despair; to ruin all present comfort, and infallibly lead to temporal as well as eternal misery; then indeed will the charm of delusion be dissolved, and youth and inexperience be preserved from utter perdition.

There is a spirit of presumption which resents instruction; and the temper of ingratitude is often so rancorous, that it derives a malicious satisfaction in repaying bounty with injury, and conciliation with insult. As superstition is the folly of the gross and ignorant multitude, so infidelity is the crime of the profligate of every description; the refuge, the poor but transient consolation, of debauchery. Those who choose to lead a bad life will not be ready to listen to the persuasion or to the dictates of religion. We can therefore easily account for the opposition of carnal minds. Let it not how-

ever be supposed that we mean to accuse all who unhappily adopt sceptical opinions, of bad morals. We are not so uncharitable. We sincerely grieve that there should sometimes be found men of exemplary character, who yet are under this melancholy infatuation. But for some, who are better informed, we must account on very different principles. There is, unhappily, too often a pride in letters. Some, who esteem themselves qualified to teach, become uneasy under prescription ; and wish to be the dictators of science. Vanity intrudes into the sanctity of the study ; is a powerful seducer, and often has become the parent of infidelity. Since to tread in the accustomed path is to be lost in a crowd, men hope from every deviation to acquire a degree of pre-eminence, or at least to attract observation. He, who inculcates truth already received can alone share distinction with the multitude. He, who contends in the ranks may exhibit courage of the highest degree, but may fail of distinction ; but he, who challenges to single combat ensures the notice of every eye. Ambition is seldom content to share its honours : it claims perpetual superiority, and is insatiate of glory. But should the honours of victory not always be attainable by the disputant, yet even doubt gives an

air of importance, and is a very easy mode of acquiring reputation. It is a substitute for knowledge; since to object is easier than to defend. Very little talent is requisite for distrust. Proof and demonstration demand deep research and considerable acquirement.

There is another species of character, either of natural or acquired apathy, which appears incapable of being affected by any thing great or feeling. This insensibility of temper is perhaps the result of habitual indolence. That those should be indifferent to the invitations of religion, who are indifferent to all that is interesting, is what may be expected; but this coldness, though it may not amount to absolute infidelity, though it may not produce active enemies, lessens the number of our friends. There are many who are so careless of religion, that they neglect to examine its evidences; and there are others, who, having hastily adopted the doctrines of infidelity, become too prejudiced against revelation to weigh dispassionately the arguments which are brought in its support. Thousands read the works of unbelievers, who never will consent to peruse the admirable and able answers which have been written in confutation of them.

It is certain that the temper of the mind

materially affects our religious sentiments. A cheerful and easy temper will incline us to look, not only on all the works of the Almighty with delight, but to love his moral perfections, and to feel an interest in all that relates to him. A good mind easily amalgamates with religion; but one soured by discontent, or agitated by turbulent passions, will admit nothing exhilarating, and, like deeper colours, will absorb the rays of light. Such characters acquire a distaste for all that is good or excellent, and delight not in any contemplation, which has a tendency to promote a love and veneration of the divine Being. They look upon all the manifestations of his mercy and goodness with a sullen and a stupid indifference. In vain the sun cherishes or enlightens: they feel not its warmth, they are not kindled into love or gratitude. They exercise reason, the best gift of Heaven, in searching for arguments against the power and the providence of God. In his perfections they search only for imaginary error: they distrust divine wisdom because it is not commensurate to their finite scale of reason: indeed they would make human understanding the measure of infinite wisdom.

I shall not dwell on another cause of ob-

jection to the doctrines of our blessed Saviour ; their perfect purity, and interdiction of all vicious indulgence. To a religion that recommends the subjugation of all irregular desire, that preaches denial, mortification, resistance to temptation, there must ever be reluctant hearers. Can the miser be easily persuaded to diffuse in bounty what he has accumulated by long and tedious parsimony ? the rapacious to restitution ? the irascible to patience ? the revengeful to forgiveness ? or the selfish to the love of mankind ?

Of Atheists we need not treat, since it may reasonably be doubted whether such really exist ; for the impious often confess by their fears the weakness of their boast. Pretensions to such disgusting impiety are the effects of mental derangement, and are always accompanied with a total depravity of morals. It is the madness of wickedness, and the last state of corruption. But the manners of the Deist are more insinuating and plausible, and by such the unsuspicious are too easily deluded. The one immediately alarms a good mind, and he carries in his defiance the same external signs of ferocity, which characterize animals of prey : the other is at once fair and venomous ; mild and subtle ; gentle and

treacherous : his words are enticing, but infuse a slow and a secret poison, which saps the moral constitution, and vitiates the soul. Scepticism is fond of admiration, and no zealot is more earnest to make profelytes than the Deist : he must be gratified with his circle of hearers and admirers. The Infidel never retires to the desert for silent meditation : he must find his converts in society ; that society which he disturbs by a cruel and mischievous zeal, and whose confidence he has shaken by delusive doubts. The preacher of irreligion endeavours to fascinate by imposing pretences : he even affects a zeal for the service of mankind, and for the advancement of good morals : he assumes the character of virtue : he is clothed in humility : *His words are smoother than oil, yet be they very swords ; the poison of asps is under his lips*^c : he talks of the beauty of that virtue which he does not practice : he disguises vice under the specious garb of some excellence, with a pomp of words his boast is of human reason and of human sufficiency, while he is the dupe and the slave of his passions ; and his life, ever at variance with his professions, proves the fallibility of his system.

^c Romans, c. iii. v. 13.

But though the pretences of Deists, both ancient and modern, may in some respects differ, their object is the same. They affect the title of philosophers, while it is their occupation to dissuade us from wisdom; not to discover truth, but to distort it. They have been embodied under various leaders; but the champions are all subtle, active, and bold. They persevere with constancy worthy of a better cause. They mingle reputation with impiety, and systematically direct their aim against the Rock of Ages. But the same ambition, which induces them to reject revelation, inspires each with the desire of being the author of a system; and, whilst they are at variance with each other, for their principles are inconsistent, they are only agreed in enmity against the Gospel. But, to repeat what has been before observed, let not modern unbelievers flatter themselves with the idea that their sentiments are novel: all they advance, if it have any variety, is merely a modification of the leading principles of the schools of antiquity. Thus the eternity of matter; the fortuitous concurrence of atoms; the irresistible influence of fate; philosophical necessity; objections to a divine Providence from apparent imperfection in his works and moral government; doubts

of a future existence; all these various questions were agitated by ancient philosophers. That matter proceeded from the substance of a self-existent Deity, and that after a period all things would again be absorbed in him; that he would then exist alone; that after another period other beings would be again produced from him, and that these successive revolutions would be perpetual, was and is still the prevailing doctrine of the East. The Stoics adopted this opinion as well as the Gnostics, who perplexed the first preachers of the Gospel. Aristotle, though a naturalist, if he did not expressly deny the being of God, yet supposed the universe to have existed from all eternity, independent of his contrivance or wisdom. Epicurus, as he made his motive atoms the original cause of all created things, conjectured that they would again be resolved into their first principles. His doctrines indeed have been the favourite tenets of the greater part of subsequent philosophers. Whether sincerely or not, he admitted that there were Gods; and that there is a God modern sceptics admit. He probably was influenced to this confession by the fear of public censure. It is to be supposed that subsequent sceptics have been under a similar impression; and, to render their

opinions more palatable, grant what they doubt. Yet, while he confessed the existence of popular Gods, he denied that they cared for human affairs. And is not this the argument of those who deny a particular Providence? He talked of the beauty of virtue, but removed all the incentives which alone could give it interest or vigour. Such too are the opinions of those sceptical multitudes, who with a perverse and infatuated ingratitude appear to disdain the offers of Heaven; who wish to owe eternal as well as temporal felicity to any cause, rather than to the bounty of their Creator. They will neither be happy in the manner which infinite wisdom condescends to propose, nor submit their understandings to God himself. They attribute excellence to any cause rather than to him. They attribute the effect of creative power rather to the efforts of nature, than to the intentions of the Deity. They grant prescience and contrivance to inactive matter, rather than to the agency of God; and, instead of being awakened by the proofs of his wisdom and goodness to sentiments of love and admiration, they receive all this intimation with coldness, if not with abhorrence. Of the origin of evil, the most absurd ideas have been entertained by the Ori-

ental Philosophers ; and yet, however absurd, they form the grounds of all objections which are still made against a particular Providence. Our blessed Lord had himself to contend with the Sadducees, who, following the doctrines of their founder Sadoc, maintained the system of materialism, and denied a resurrection or future state, inferring that there was neither angel or spirit. On the whole, we can trace every modern dogma to some ancient source. How humiliating must it then be to the free-thinker, to learn, that he cannot arrogate to himself the praise of novelty, which is his chief inducement for objecting to revelation ; that his favourite positions have been anticipated, and are at the same time as destitute of originality, as they are void of solid conviction !

The miracles of our blessed Master could not be denied by those who saw them ; but, agreeably to the prejudices of the times, they were ascribed to the cooperation of evil demons. Imposture was not imputed to these effects of divine power. The proofs were too decisive and public. Such impiety was reserved for subsequent ages, who could suggest it with less danger of confutation. What then is there of variety, what of consistency, for present

Infidels ? Like those whom Cicero calls minute philosophers, their disposition is to diminish and to measure every thing by a minute scale. They look not at the whole scheme ; they consider not the agreement of the parts, the unity and combinations by which all becomes great and magnificent. Thus they calculate by an inverse ratio and by subdivision, and are incapable of enlarged comprehension.

The most interesting sentiment which the human mind can entertain is that of its connection with the first and best of Beings. If all Deists do not endeavour to annihilate this hope, they decidedly weaken its foundation. They substitute human instead of divine assurance ; they reduce that to conjecture which ought to be fixed on some solid basis. Man may, indeed, by the light of nature, entertain this hope, but confidence can only be acquired from revelation ; by the declaration of a Being who is mighty to save. This only can be the ratification of promise, or the realizing of hope.

Now what is the sum of all, to which these arrogant pretenders would persuade us, but to surrender the complacency of rational conviction for scepticism and uncertainty ? to inter-

rupt the connection that religion offers between the soul of man and his Maker? to give up the highest authority for visionary and earthly speculation? Faith in revelation is by sceptics branded with the name of superstition. But it may be affirmed, that if superstition consist in confiding on groundless hope, and trusting in false pretences, no superstition can be more gross than to rely on these erroneous and visionary systems. But let us not be deceived; let us not forfeit the source of true happiness to gratify the vanity of those, who, though they may be wise in their own conceit, bring no assurance to the dispassionate mind. Let us not be cheated of our reason to swell the catalogue of the disciples of the Infidel, and to exchange the soberness of truth for the madness of impiety. Good men experience a soothing power in divine trust sufficient to soften all the evils and the asperities of life. It is this happy state of mental tranquillity that infidels and enthusiasts equally disturb: the one robs the soul of its best support, a confidence in the promises of his Saviour; the other would persuade us, that God is partial and implacable. Thus the mind, agitated and overwhelmed, shaken with the tempest of doubt, or clouded by the gloom of

despair, flies to vice for a refuge, and the scene is at last too frequently closed by horrid self-destruction, or by the slower suicide of intoxication. When we calmly weigh all the arguments of infidelity, they are found *light indeed in the balance*. Wearied with the conjectural perplexities of sophists, and the clamour of disputants, we sigh for stronger conviction than any which they can afford. Disgusted with all the pomp and parade of metaphysical inquiry, and shaken from all solid ground and hope, we shall perhaps be induced at length to envy the humble acquiescence of the poor woman of Syro-phœnicia, of whom we read in the Gospel, who intreated to be fed, if it were only *with the crumbs which fell from the Master's table*^a. So vain and inconclusive are all the arguments of philosophy! So consolatory and so soothing the most distant expectation of the promises of the Gospel of Christ!

I have before observed, that a favourite tenet of the Deist is the sufficiency of human reason for the conduct of life. No assertion can be more false. Before reason can serve for a rule of life, it is necessary that men

^a Matthew xv. 27.

should understand and agree on the principles, the limits, and the extent of duty. But all must be capable of drawing correct conclusions before they can ascertain the rule. Of these some are obvious, but many extremely intricate; and therefore, before we could understand our duty, we ought, on their principle, to become adepts in moral science. The impracticability of this is evident; for life would be exhausted before duty could be understood, and knowledge be gained too late for practice. Vicious habits would be formed, and completely established, before we could correct them. It is further obvious, that a sanction would still be wanting for the confirmation of every rule. This can only be derived from Heaven. Thus, that children should honour their parents may be deduced from natural religion; but the law of God, which says, Honour thy father and thy mother, converts ethical excellence into perfect righteousness, and the still voice which breathes in the language of nature is again loudly proclaimed from Heaven. But it is clear, that the ancient philosophers were desirous of forming schools from an affectation of superior intellect. They were anxious to gain disciples to flatter natural vanity, but they cared little for the practical

effect of their instructions. Many of them were, beyond contradiction, extremely defective in morals, and for the mass of mankind they had little regard. Now if it could be proved that any nation, or even small societies of antiquity, had so far profited by the instructions of philosophy as to have exhibited a living testimony of their benefit, and of the efficacy of unassisted reason, the assertion of the sceptic would be established. But as this has never happened ; as no nation, no city or society of the world, antecedent to the coming of Christ, has given such proof, it is evident that all the precepts and schools of philosophy were extremely ineffectual for this purpose.

We have the authority of Cicero to confirm the assertion ; an authority which cannot be reasonably questioned. It may be urged, that the precepts of our blessed Saviour have not completely ameliorated the practice of mankind, since much vice is still in existence, and the Christian world still deformed with crimes. At present it will be sufficient to deny this ; for we may boldly assert, that the doctrines of Christ have produced considerable effect on society. But admit the contrary, and how would that recommend the light of reason,

which has been experimentally defective? But with respect to the mode of instruction adopted in the Gospel, there can be no comparison. The moral doctrines of Christ are so generalized, that they apply to all descriptions and to all capacities of men. Without minute detail, they afford such comprehensive and applicable rules, that they form a measure and a principle of duty for all possible occasions and contingencies. Whereas the ethical systems of the Gentile world were full of intricacy, and, to be understood, required to be deeply studied.

One method of calumniating revelation is to call it the invention of priestcraft to establish a temporal dominion over the minds of men for the purposes of ambition and interest. Now though such objects may have been the aim of the selfish and the artful, yet this, as a general assertion, is false and unfounded. Will the conduct of more barbarous ages destroy the truth of religion? Or can such a charge now be urged with any effect? The Protestant faith is founded on rational inquiry, and the renunciation of error. It is an emancipation from the slavery of superstition and bigotry. The evidences of the truth are not confined to the Clergy. Know-

ledge of every kind is now universally diffused in Protestant countries. The established Church claims no exclusive information ; but has opened the Bible for the inspection of all eyes, and for the examination of all who may scrutinize. Free access is given to research. We pretend to no mysteries of evidence. Our arguments are fair, and our discussion candid and liberal. We wish that only to be believed, which may be satisfactorily proved. But though less coarse accusers do not asperse us with so vulgar a calumny, they insinuate that we are influenced by a selfish and a party spirit in a common cause. Among the defenders of the faith may be reckoned Christians of various denominations, both at home and abroad, who have been equally diligent, and who have been eminently cooperative in confirming its evidences. It will be found too, in the established Church, that many of its most able and active defenders have not been actuated by worldly motives. Of this a Hooker and a Mede are decisive examples. If a few members of the establishment are in possession of high emoluments, let not the illiberal propose this as an objection to our cause. That the Church should be supported by some temporal advantages is highly proper ; and a just

and well regulated distribution of these, to stimulate literary exertion and industry, is of the greater advantage to society. There are thousands of our body who seek no honour but that of giving glory to God, neither eagerly nor unjustifiably grasping at preferment, nor affecting to despise remuneration, if fairly and honestly to be obtained; not repining at the success of others, but content "to eat their bread in peace and privacy^h," to meditate day and night on the word of God, and to labour without ceasing *to do the will of their Father which is in heaven.*

To object to a respectable provision for the Clergy betrays a mean and a levelling spirit. There is no possibility of regulating the various orders of society by abstract ideas, and therefore learning and talents are not alone sufficient to support respect. The worldly-minded would not listen to the doctrines, but rather smile at the voluntary poverty of those, who should dedicate their lives solely to unprofitable study. It is a great mistake to compare the primitive age of the Gospel with the present. Then God was pleased to support the Church by ocular demonstration. The first

^h Hooker.

Christians saw and believed ; and yet the doctrines of the Apostles were opposed and disputed by the presumption of their cotemporaries. The prosperity of the church, at present, depends on second causes, under the silent influence of divine grace.

Another reproach of the Infidel is, that a belief in revelation is the consequence of a blind superstition. This we deny. To look to futurity, and in distress to supplicate a superior power, is a natural sentiment. Man does not alone apply to Heaven because he is under the impression of fear, but because he is also desirous of good. The whole of life is a struggle between temporal and eternal interests ; and if the former sometimes prevail, it does not therefore follow that we possess no conviction of the superior importance of the other. He may sincerely believe in the truth, who has not grace sufficient to resist temptation : even all profligate men are not in this sense Infidels. They may always be promising themselves reformation. But here lies the distinction : if we consent to the sacrifice of principle, or if, having no faith, we profess what we do not believe, for interested motives only, this is indeed detestable hypocrisy. If men make ostentatious professions of humility, or

of voluntary poverty, to cover the designs of artifice, and yet betray an eagerness to deceive ; or privately enriching themselves overreach, or take advantage of a neighbour, their religion is indeed vain. Turn over the pages of biographical history : many will be found, who have arrived at dignity by the fair and direct path of learning and virtue. You may read the annals of many who have reluctantly embraced higher stations, and have been induced to sacrifice, what they have preferred, private tranquillity, because they have been persuaded that they must make the sacrifice to public utility, and to the service of God. Let us then hear no more of the charge of priestcraft. If revelation be true, God will no more suffer the sins of men to extinguish its light, than he will suffer an eclipse to produce permanent darkness.

To prove our sincerity in the Christian faith, it is not necessary that we should renounce the world ; for that would be to forsake our posts, and to betray the cause : but sincerity rather requires us to shew our light unto men, and to *fight the good fight of faith, ⁱ that we may be more than conquerors through him that loved us^k*. Need we recount the sufferings of mar-

ⁱ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

^k Rom. viii. 37.

tyrs ? of a Cranmer, a Latimer, or a Ridley ? No ! But we can appeal to the history of a Berkely, to prove the disinterested conduct of the defenders of religion, and of the pastors of our Church ; and we may add, that the Clergy have shewn, and it is humbly presumed still display, a noble and a generous zeal for the cause in which they are engaged.

What must be the dying reflections of that man, who has risked eternal happiness for the chance of a profligate reputation, or who from deliberate malice has endeavoured to injure the cause of religion ? Will he not then be reminded by conscience, that he has contributed to contaminate innocence, to defile virtue, to weaken the blissful suggestions of hope, to add pangs to doubt, to sharpen the agonies of despair and the stings of remorse, to shed darkness over the dawn of inquiry, to indurate the feelings, to nip the blossoms of expectation, and to render the whole of present existence wretched and inconsolable ? that he has endeavoured to shake the basis of all truth, to injure the best interests of man, to teach children ingratitude, governors tyranny, and subjects rebellion ? that he has endeavoured to disturb social order, and to introduce anarchy and confusion in its place ? How dreadful must

his dying reflection be, who has invented a more efficacious and active poison, who has given occasion to all posterity to bewail the perversion of his talents, and to lament the hour of his birth ; who has contributed to accelerate the corruption of youth, and the sorrows of grey hairs ! Such are the fruits of infidelity ! Such are the thorns which must render the bed of death more painful ! Compare this with the departing hour of his life, who can recollect the utility of his days ; who has contrived new modes of reducing the miseries, or of adding to the comforts of existence ; who has enlarged the dominion of goodness, and turned many to righteousness.

Finally ; from the contrast, let me be permitted to caution the younger part of my hearers against the fallacious and seductive persuasions of infidelity. Be assured, that however the unbeliever may be elated with his own imaginary triumphs, yet happily he cannot support his arguments by proof : he has no demonstration : he may irritate our feelings, but cannot confound the hope that is in us : if you hear his objection and his assurances, you will find, on examination, that the first are merely negative, the other groundless. The pretender to Atheism will tell you that there

is no God, and consequently no hope or fear from futurity. From him your own observation will induce you to turn with disdain, because every thing within you, and every thing without, confute his assertions. Be assured, that while he would thus rob you of confidence, he will cast a dismal gloom over the whole of your existence, present and future; that he will steal the light from you, and consign you to a depth of tenfold darkness. The Deist chills the soul with a frigid apathy. He will tell you that God is good; but has not condescended to bestow his attention on his creatures. Thus he will teach you to hunger for the bread of life, but forbid you to expect to taste of it. Cruel and melancholy prospect! more embittered, by the assurance of the reality of that goodness, which you are not to expect to share. If then God regard us not, if he have not been pleased to reveal his will to us, if all the expectation on which we have been taught to rely be without foundation, in what are you to trust? In this child of dust and ashes, in this fallible individual, who assures us that he has a system, which is to support and direct us under every trial; a discovery, which has escaped all penetration but his own? He recommends to us a distrust of

the wisdom of an infinite Being, and invites us to confide in the insect of a day. He takes away the foundation of hope ; he leaves us nothing to cheer the sadness, or to soothe the pains of existence. We are overwhelmed with misfortune ; we are excruciated by pain ; we linger under the tortures of disease ; we pine under the languor of ill-health. Where is our consolation ? Only the help of man ; of a being who, in such cases, often cannot relieve us. We find ourselves sinking into the grave ; that grave which he has made for us a land of doubt and of darkness. We are forbid to trust in the only power which can help. The bitterness of death is rendered still more bitter. We are to see our dearest connections and friends dropping around us. Those whom we tenderly love are torn asunder with the distracted fear of eternal separation. Under such circumstances, we are persuaded to reject that divine Comforter who offers and can give that peace of mind, *which the world cannot give*. We are to reject the promises of revealed religion, which alone afford rational hope and firm conviction. Virtue struggling to improve in the school of affliction is to sink into forgetfulness, and all moral excellence to perish. Charity and goodness, which, if not immortal, must be al-

lowed to merit immortality, are to be scattered like the fragrance in the air. When we are solicited by some urgent temptation, we are not to ask grace or assistance of God, but to recal to mind the beauty of virtue; as if present gratification could be resisted by abstract conceptions. Can this be expected by the sound philosopher? Does not this betray an ignorance of human nature? Is not this to forget that men often admire what they cannot love, and that action and speculation are very distinct? That this picture is not overcharged, must be evident to all who think coolly and impartially. Let us then turn from this dreary prospect, to the consolatory invitation of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ: *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, and take heed that none of us entertain an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

LECTURE II.

ROMANS i. 20.

The invisible things of him from the creation of the world were clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse.

THESE words of St. Paul, as well as various other passages of the Scriptures, assert the manifestations of an omniscient and omnipotent Creator in the phenomena of the natural world. The Apostle reprehends the errors of those speculative men, who, in the vanity of their imaginations, had lost sight of the most obvious truth, and had neglected to draw such inference from facts as could scarcely even escape the vulgar ; *professing themselves to be wise, they became fools* : for even to the vulgar all created things must appear to have their origin from a supreme Being ; because *that which is known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them ; because the invisible things of him from the creation of the*

world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. Before we can entertain any faith in the Christian revelation, it is necessary for us to possess a firm conviction of the doctrine of a particular providence, which constitutes the basis of revelation. It will therefore be requisite, in the following discourse, to shew that the operation of God in the natural world is perpetual and uninterrupted; and we must so adjust the statement of facts, that it may be understood how far he employs second causes; how subservient, and how extremely limited these are; and that they never ought to be mistaken for their Author, whose vigilance is ever actively superintendant; *by whom all things live, and move, and have their being^a; who made the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts; the earth, and all things that are therein; and who preserveth them all, and whom all the hosts of heaven worship,*

The grand principle of religion is the being of a God, from which all our obligations and our duties flow. But it is of the highest importance, as the ground of the Christian faith, that we should acquire, not only a conviction

^a Acts xvii. 28.

of the being, but also of the particular providence of the Deity. We must believe that he is immediately concerned in the works of nature and of grace : for it has been the constant aim of Deists to lessen our confidence in the immediate interposition of a God ; and since they have not dared to deny his being, they have laboured to represent him as an impassive spectator of all the affairs of the natural world. Suppose the contrary ; admit God to be anxious for the happiness and welfare of man, and all his works of creation ; and all the systems and arguments of the sceptic lose their foundation. The doctrines of our blessed Lord on this head are so express, that we cannot hesitate to place implicit confidence in the superintendence of a particular providence. For, not to insist on all his recommendations of faith and of prayer ; his promises of grace, of spiritual aid, and of a divine Comforter ; he tells us, that *the very hairs of our head are all numbered*^b ; that *not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father*^c. And he grounds our trust in the Gospel promises on this principle. When he informs us, that we ought not to be over solicitous about temporal affairs,

^b Matt. x. 3.^c Ver. 29.

he remarks, *Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?* In another place, he says, *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God. Ye are of more value than many sparrows*^d. In these instances his inference is drawn from this consideration, that if the meaner parts of the creation be not beneath the immediate and constant care of the Creator, we may conclude, that beings who hold a superior rank must be proportionably greater objects of heavenly regard.

I shall therefore, in the first place, endeavour to support the doctrine of a superintending first Cause, in opposition to those opinions which have a tendency to attribute all the order and beauty of the creation to second causes.

I shall then shew, that second causes are not independent of the first, because they exhibit marks of subordination; and that there are relations and analogies throughout nature, which prove that all effects proceed from one and the same origin, and contribute to promote one grand and complete design.

^d Luke xii. 6, 7.

Modern sceptics have attempted to refer the admirable contrivance of the Deity, for the preservation of all created matter, to voluntary efforts of nature towards perfection, by gradual advance. But who does not perceive, that to attribute productive powers to second causes is to render the final cause of less importance; and if created matter can act by principles that are in themselves efficient and independent of the great Author of nature, then his care becomes less necessary, and the doctrine of a particular providence, the first and the best ground of support under adversity, is annihilated or weakened. The doctrine before us is a modification of the atomical system. It supposes certain particles of matter to exist, endowed with peculiar propensities, which, however shapeless at first, yet, by continued appetite and action, acquire organization and forms, though by an almost imperceptible process. It is admitted, that this change may be the work of indefinite ages, as these philosophers believe the world to be of a much longer date than revelation assures us, for they regard the wisdom which is from above with perfect indifference. They consider a succession of thousands of ages as favourable to their plan. They adopt the old opinion of the eternity of matter,

and of a circle of revolving years, in which all things fade and revive again and again. Having advanced the existence of prolific fibres, they suppose them by continual efforts and action to arrive at length to a state of being continually capable of further perfection. But it is absurd to admit, that matter can become organized by volition. On the contrary, the volition and the power of action would rather naturally succeed organization. True philosophy, with more pretensions to credit, shews us, that all created beings have come from the hands of their Maker exactly provided with such means of increase and preservation as he intended; and though by exercise those powers may be developed and expanded, yet that they can no more add of themselves to their capacities, than the sea can by its own efforts increase the quantity of its fluid; or matter, independent of fixed laws or the will of the Creator, augment its power of attraction. The advocates of this doctrine have confounded a principle of self-preservation with that of advancement or production. The Almighty, for instance, has endowed the whole system of nature with some faculties of renovation or of restitution, within prescribed limits, but has placed impassable boundaries to the perfection

of his admirable works. In a mutable state of things, it is impossible but that accident must injure the most perfect; and to repair these probable or possible injuries, nature is undeniably possessed of certain capabilities; but these are absolutely limited. In the animal world we find provisions for supply in case of injury or loss. If in animals a bone be broken, nature is provided with matter to form a callous, which serves to reunite and strengthen the injured part. An animal oil is constantly supplied to lubricate the joints; and to restore the perpetual waste of the solids or the fluids there is a constant renovating principle. In the vegetable kingdom this principle is variously exhibited. Plants have other methods of increase beside that of the seed. Some are increased by the separation of the root, of the branches, or even buds; which then become new plants, and in this resemble the inferior tribes of animal life, such as the polypi. Some plants send forth suckers, by which they become multiplied; some increase by their very leaves, or what may seem to be equivocally leaves or branches; but it is evident that no animal or vegetable genus, since it came from the hands of its Maker, has increased the number of its parts or faculties. There

can be no truth more clearly established, than that God has fixed to all nature, as to the waves of the ocean, bounds which they never shall pass. That the works of the creation are governed by laws impressed on them by the Almighty, and not by any partial faculties of their own, must be apparent from the great frugality, and the whole course of nature. Throughout the system of created things there evidently appears one regular design; and, however the Deity in his infinite wisdom may be pleased to make occasional deviations, yet these are still subservient to a general and uniform simplicity.

Were matter capable of self-organization, besides the deficiencies, which would inevitably be considerable, unless it were possessed both of prescience and supreme power, there would be great incongruity and contrariety in the several parts of the same animal or vegetable. Animated forms could not be supported, because they would be defective in necessary and indispensable organs; the process of vegetation would be interrupted in plants from a similar deficiency. Now, though there is much diversity in the corporeal structure of animals, and great variety in the forms and habits of vegetables, yet these phenomena are all redu-

cible to evident design. Animals which creep on the earth are not provided with the means which enable some to ascend into the air, or others to float in the water. Plants again, which inhabit the colder regions, are provided with the means of enduring a tempestuous climate; those which are to flourish in the parching desert are supplied with peculiar means of imbibing the moisture of the atmosphere, and of enduring a long state of aridity. In all creatures, and in all vegetables, there are provisions peculiar to the habits, the local situation, and the purposes of each; infinitely indeed diversified, yet all subservient to one grand and simple design, which pervades the whole of nature, and bespeaks the uniform intention of the benevolent and great Creator. All the parts contribute to a beautiful and admirable system, proving, beyond all possibility of contradiction, the divine wisdom which animates, which directs, and which has planned the whole. There are the same peculiar traces of skill, which we discover in the artificial works of men of eminent ingenuity. Thus all the works of God tend to harmony and congruity of design, in the same manner as in the systems of the heavenly bodies the superior

or subordinate operations are governed by one law, and tend to the same point of gravity.

But an argument has been drawn from spontaneous vitality, or, in other words, the facility by which animals of less perfect organization are increased, in favour of a similar process of formation of the more perfect. Thus the various species of polypi, whether larger or microscopic, may be multiplied, like plants, by cutting or self-dividing. This, however, is only a slight deviation of the order of nature; is at the same time extremely limited, and subject to fixed law. It would be absurd from hence to conclude, that more perfect animals or plants ever had such an origin; that an oak had been produced from a moss, or a lion from an insect.

It has often been urged against the doctrine of casual productions, that when we view any complicated machine, we naturally conclude that it had some contriver and maker. It has been further observed, that should such a machine by accident be injured or disordered, and in this state should we again view it and find this disorder rectified, we should naturally conclude that this was the effect of some skill similar to that by which it was at first formed.

This undoubtedly would be the inference of one who had never before seen such an instance of human contrivance. To this let it be added, that it is perfectly unnatural to imagine, that even a human artist could be indifferent to the effect of any specimen of great ingenuity which was the result of his own contrivance. Now it is highly reasonable to infer, that the Divine Artificer is not regardless of his most admirable works. A difference does indeed exist between the art of man and the wisdom of God. Human capacity being extremely limited, the works of man are liable to many defects, and require perpetual reparation. The works of God are exquisitely formed, and we may observe in all, that, for the period of duration to which they are destined to last, there are principles of renovation and repair. This is evident in the human frame, which is so constituted by nature, that for a limited space of time it is provided with the means of preservation and renovation. This too is evident in many species of animals, which, if by accident a limb be lost, have that loss supplied by the accession of new ones, similar to vegetation: and, lastly, this is evident in plants, in which there is a regular provision for restoring parts that are injured or destroyed. Here the

philosopher may assert, that God, having afforded such modes of renovation and supply, may leave the whole process of nature to go on, on those perpetuating and renovating principles, independent of any particular interposition. But it is to be observed, that this extraordinary provision carries with it all the appearance of actual interposition. For it may be asked, What are these principles? Whence is the source of that supply? If that be not destined for perpetuity, yet it intimates a care and regard in the Creator for the work of his hand. Now care implies affection; it is an attribute of Deity; and, in proportion to the excellence of the source, it will be more ardent and free from defect. God then cannot but be essentially benevolent; and in the proportion of the superiority of his perfections over every thing human, will be his love of his creatures and his creation. The best object of human affection too is virtue, the result of intellectual perfection, and therefore God cannot but love goodness in man, however imperfect in degree it may be. To suppose the Almighty then not to entertain a peculiar regard for those improvements in the soul of man, which have emanated from his own superior excellence, is impossible.

Could any thing less than divine intellect have adapted a flexible trunk to the elephant, exquisitely endowed with the sense of feeling; an animal, whose neck is short and unbending, and purposely short to sustain such a weight of tusks? Who has endowed the camel with a stomach sufficiently capacious to contain water for a considerable length of time, and with feet peculiarly adapted to its habits and utility in traversing immense deserts? What but wise design could have given contractile muscles to enable reptiles to move which are deprived of feet? What but divine power and boundless wisdom could have given a rigid cornea to the eyes of fish, capable of resisting a fluid denser than the air? or an hard shell to the slothful tortoise, capable of sustaining the weight of bodies, which, by rapidly moving over them, must otherwise crush them? Why are the viscera of quadrupeds, which are prone, differently disposed than those of man, who is destined for an erect posture? Why are the lungs of fish so different from other animals, and so exactly suited to their element? But it were endless to multiply such interrogations. The answer to all must be evident. It is divine, infallible, unerring wisdom. It is the power of an intelligent and

Almighty God which alone could produce such provident variety, and adapt it to the several habits and peculiar circumstances of his boundless creation. There is a disposition in some to attribute all the faculties of animals to exercise, which has undoubtedly a powerful effect. But unless an antecedent provision had been made by the design of the great Creator, no exertion of the animal could be effective. Aquatic birds would never be able to swim if their feet were not originally webbed. It is here to be observed, that all instances of deviation from the general rule of nature afford us more striking proofs of divine skill; nor do they in the least destroy the harmony of the works of God, but rather tend to preserve it; because they evidently prove the complicated, yet uniform intention of the Deity. The conclusion to be drawn from eccentricities is, that while they obviously form a part of the general system, they are so far from affording argument in support of atheism, or of non-interference of the Creator, that they directly tend to prove more extraordinary care for the welfare of the creation in general, and of its several parts.

Another proof of the impossibility of accidental arrangement of matter, is the wonderful supply for occasional waste, and the exact ba-

lance which seems to be attained in the works of God. Thus many plants afford nourishment to animals, and at the same time serve for the increase and preservation of the species. They are consequently liable to be completely devoured, and but for the provident care of the Deity would be annihilated. This is prevented by their multitudinous production, and by various provisions for their preservation and facility of growth. The same analogy is observable in animals. The more minute these are, and for that reason very liable to perish, they are proportionally more numerous. The seeds of plants are analogous to the eggs of animals. Whatever in nature is most useful is most abundant. Now many of the minute seeds possess a power of vegetation which is very durable, and which seems to be almost inextinguishable. The eggs of animalculæ are capable of remaining a considerable time, without bringing the embryo into life, until they meet with favourable circumstances. The surface of vegetables is covered with the minute and invisible eggs of microscopic animals; but as these animals are of the aquatic species, they cannot be hatched without the application of water. As soon as they are immersed in this fluid they become productive.

The harmony which exists in all the various works of God is never deranged by the eccentricity of subordinate parts. If we look to the celestial system, does centrifugal force ever induce such excess, as to elude the general law by which all matter tends to one centre of gravity? And is there not one general submission of all to the simple law of nature, which gives motion and direction to the whole? In the various chemical processes, infinite attractions, combinations, repulsions, and solutions, are perpetually in action to produce infinite effects, which are all subject to the first law. If any appetite of nature could by self-combination or arrangement produce an individual species, that species would be at variance with generic laws. It is therefore impossible to suppose this arrangement and subordination could arise from any other cause than one superior Agent; and this Agent can only be an omniscient and omnipotent God. If it be asked, whether eternal Prescience has predestined the types and figures of things, and so exactly defined their improvements, as to fix their utmost boundaries? our reply is, undoubtedly. The doctrine we mean to advance is that there is nothing in nature fortuitous; and that, whatever variations may arise, they are all subject

to unchangeable laws and restrictions. Some insects are productive of several generations without the usual process of renovation; yet these successions are all limited, and never exceed the precise number assigned them. Can this be accident?

By attributing to the particles of matter any thing like appetency, if by that term we are to understand more than attractive or chemical affinity, we give volition; and as the particles of matter possess various affinities or attractions, and as some are repulsive, or incapable of affinity, such opposite volitions would prevent all regular combination, and there would be perpetual conflicts. But if we suppose them only to act in conformity to the laws of nature, or God, by which we mean the same thing, they then act regularly and consistently with the general plan of a superior Agent; of a divine Mind. To suppose different volitions would be to admit universal confusion. For what contradictions and opposite agency would there not be in volition acting without subordination? On this head it is necessary that we should form distinct ideas, that we may not attribute to matter powers which are foreign to its nature; for even if we admit that matter by various combinations may acquire thought,

yet it would be absurd, and a contradiction, to suppose thought to be antecedent to such combinations. One of the arguments for the appetential power of nature is that of the increase of animal life by solitary production. But this only proves that nature has various modes of increase; for as this succession is extremely limited, it can never be an argument for self-generation, but directly the contrary. It is no more than a mode similar to that by which plants are increased by the offset or sucker. We can readily grant, that particles, infinitely minute, by a concretion of affinities, may form infinite combinations; for this is philosophically true; and for this we need not the work of ages. The whole system of animal life is reproduced by these efforts. The time of gestation in animals, though various, is long in few. Now the particles of the farina of plants are infinitely minute. The same is applicable to animal life. But on this mysterious subject it is enough to remark, that particles equally minute, by accretion, by accumulation and expansion, produce a great effect of organization, and this without volition. All is the regular and natural effect of the law of nature, conforming to the model proposed by the unlimited mind of the Creator; in con-

formity to that, and to his own invariable plan, they can only act. It is not possible for the constituent particles of organized life to produce other effects than God is pleased to decree. The constituent principles follow the plan assigned them. Thus the constituent principles of an animal can never become a plant, nor of a plant an animal; nor can animals have their properties mutable, and from a bird be converted into a fish: and the same law is undoubtedly universal. The volition is in the divine Mind, and nature acts uniformly by that direction, by an imparted energy, under a superintending influence.

Let us now proceed in the next place to shew, that second causes are not independent of the first, because they exhibit marks of subordination.

If we turn our eyes to the heavens, we see a magnificent apparatus of regular design; and, while the secondary planets move round their primary, the whole goes on in subservience to the laws of gravity. Nay the very opposite principles of centrifugal and centripetal force combine to produce regularity and general effect: and this sublime concordance is the result of great and more minute parts. The same regularity is to be observed in the whole

of the natural kingdoms, as they are termed, of this our earth. In the structure of animal bodies, in the moral government of the Almighty, and the political government of man; it seems to be indispensable to the production of any perfect whole, that there should be a subordination and accordance of parts, and in all nature subordinate parts act for the benefit of superior. In a plant, the root seeks nourishment, not for itself, but for the tree; the branch swells into bulk to support the mass of leaves, or the weight of its fruit, and all this in exact proportions: the leaf expands and breathes, not for itself alone, but to advance the growth of the whole plant. In the moral system of the universe the same beautiful arrangement and harmony exists. The passions and appetites of the mind, under due regulation, tend to the advancement of the general good. We love not for ourselves, but for the advantage of others. Virtue cannot be practised without conferring a blessing on others. Wisdom cannot be employed without being advantageous to others. Benevolence and charity have expansive wishes, and produce extensive effects. Again, goodness can scarcely be a solitary blessing; and no individual is happy but in communicated happiness. Even our in-

regular passions are so often productive of good to mankind, that, like tempests in the atmosphere, they are, by the wise disposition of Providence, often made subservient to general benefit. But as these topics are not immediately connected with the subject before us, to enlarge on them at present would be foreign to the purpose of this Lecture. Let it suffice to remark, that even here the same consistence is apparent, which is so eminently conspicuous in all created things. All seems to be the effect of one Intelligence, that has contrived, and governs every part by some principle perpetually active, and never forsaking the care or conduct of the whole, or the inferior parts. Now which is more agreeable to reason? To suppose all this to be the result of subordination; to imagine that the atomical parts should produce all this general and great effect; or that some Intelligence governs and directs both the superior and inferior parts to the same great and well regulated purpose? The answer must be in favour of a divine Providence. It is contrary to every conclusion of reason, to every principle and analogy of the universe, that the parts should be greater than the whole, or that the whole should be governed by the individual parts. Gravity is increased by accumula-

tion ; but the principle of gravity gives action or effect to each of their several particles : and we might as well suppose, that the principle of gravity resulted from combination of lesser gravities, as that the minute atoms of created matter should govern the whole. Gravity is indeed increased by the union of lesser gravities or particles ; but then these particles are all influenced by one and the same principle. It is the governing principle, which is the primary cause, and the parts are only subordinate and contributive. Either the parts have intelligence of themselves, or they are directed and influenced by some power, which is the cause of principle or action to all ; and that they are all governed by a principle, and not by any appetencies or volitions of their own, is self-evident : for it is contrary to all experience and all analogy to conclude, that the inferior parts can direct the greater. General effect is the result of inferior subordination ; the independence of inferior parts would never produce regularity or general effect. He who contrived the great machine, contrived and directed the motion of the inferior wheels : else all would be confusion and imperfection. There is throughout creation but one Intelligence ; that Intelligence must be supreme, and

then it must be God. This must be the first and final cause ; from this all must emanate, and to this all again must tend and revert. Whenever we take notice of any thing in nature, we observe this subordination of parts. If we see an animal, we see a compound of limbs and organs. If we discover some dis-united part, we judge that it belongs to an whole ; that it is not perfect by itself we judge from analogy, and we are never mistaken. If we should by chance discover the limb of an unknown animal, we see that it is perfect as a part ; but though we cannot immediately apply it to a particular species, yet perfection is evident in it, and it has the clear mark of subordination. Thus while every part in itself is perfect, yet that perfection tends to complete a more aggregate perfection.

One general law of animal life is instinct ; decisive and instantaneous in its operation, and at the same time so infallible, that were it not limited it would possess all the indications of primary wisdom : but this limitation proving that its powers are so circumscribed, proves at the same time that it is a subordinate agent in nature ; that it has no independent influence ;

and that it is a second cause, under the direction of something superior.

Instinct in some instances seems to depend on physical principles: thus we find that animals which are destined to feed on putrid substances are provided with the means of scenting their prey at a surprising distance. They are accordingly provided with a greater than ordinary proportion of olfactory nerves. The vulture, and other carnivorous creatures, whose employment seems to be to clear the earth of putridity, by a voracious, and, we might almost say, depraved gluttony, lessen the quantity of offensive corruption, and convert that matter into a vivifying principle, which would else spread contagion. Is this appetite? No, let us rather admire the wisdom of the Creator. Animal substances deprived of life are subject to putridity. Putridity is the means of increasing corruption; and, by rendering the air noxious, produces disease. But the wise Creator has provided creatures, which through the medium of the atmosphere are enabled to discover their destined prey, and thus preserve its salubrity. Instinct, in other instances, arises from the same exquisite sensibility of the nerves. Some are doubt-

less not to be explained on any known principles ; but in every instance it looks like superior agency. It is decidedly no acquired power of the animal. It is a given quality, because creatures which are possessed of the largest proportion in one respect, are remarkable defective in others. Now it must be granted, that in some degree the powers of animals are the effect of experience ; but instinct is an instantaneous power. Some take time to feed, or to walk, or to fly. Yet others have those faculties immediately on their birth. These are gifts not wholly dependent on experience.

There is one distinction between reason and instinct, that the former never can act but by tuition. Instinct, on the contrary, acts immediately, as it were, by an impulse. Reason is even improvable instinct. The faculties of animals may, by exercise, be enlarged or increased ; but their instincts are immediately and always alike. Reason is communicable, but instinct is never so. Reason can impart its powers, instinct cannot. Every individual creature of every species has all its experience to acquire, but all those acquirements cease with the individual. While reasonable beings profit by antecedent experience, instinct does

not. Every generation of animals can effect exactly as much as a preceding one, but no more. The impressions of instinct are stamped at once. Reason attains all its improvements by gradual advance. Thus instincts, which are the leading principles of animal life, are totally different from improvable powers, and never ripen, as some modern philosophers pretend, by gradual process. It is said, why may not God be the cause of causes? Undoubtedly he may. But he has been pleased to define and limit all the powers he has bestowed in nature. His creatures are to fulfil his will by no irregular or voluntary efforts. They are the instruments of his power. They, like the parts of a machine, are the wheels, or the balance; but are not wheels, or balance, at their own pleasure. If matter were capable of volition, or prospective design, there would be strange confusion. In some all would be sight, in some all would be ear; they would act for themselves. The result would be, discordance. We may say, in the words of the Apostle, *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling. But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all*

one member, where were the body^f. But in considering the variety and the subordination of created matter, we may say, *there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all*^g.

There are indeed occasional variations in nature, which incontestibly prove that they are formed by an intelligence not their own. Thus the bones of animals are placed within the integuments of the muscles, while the one serves to give strength, and the other to afford motion, to the limbs, and the whole body. As all such animals are destined to move in the light atmosphere, and to receive nice impressions, the flesh, the organs, and the nerves, are exterior. But in the crustaceous tribes the process of nature is in direct opposition to this. The shell is the bone of the animals, which are destined to move in shoals, and to be shaken in the rocks of the tempestuous deep. The muscles, and the softer organs, are inclosed within the less fragile substance, a substance calculated to resist more powerfully the dis-

^f 1 Cor. xii. 17, 18, 19.

^g Ver. 4, 5, 6.

alters to which the creatures are liable in a life exposed to continual accident.

It is here apparent, that this variation from the general rule and order of nature must arise from the contrivance of a divine Intelligence, and that matter, however disposed to motion or arrangement, never could be capable of such foresight. We find the same traces of design in the history of mankind, in all the events occurring, and in all prophecies and dispensations which conduced to the great and general plan of the Mosaic and the Gospel œconomy. An attentive survey of the general and individual history of mankind will prove, beyond all question, the particular interference of a divine Providence in the affairs of men; but as this life is but a part of existence, we must rest in hope, and trust that hereafter, in the final consummation of all events, the great scheme will be rendered manifest and perfect in all its subordinate parts, and in its great design.

Let us next, in the third place, consider the analogies of nature. Of these we may take such a brief survey as may enable us to elucidate our position; that they proceed from one and the same origin, and contribute to promote the same grand and uniform design.

Though reasoning by analogy will not in

general serve for complete demonstration, it applies admirably to the present argument; for nothing can more decidedly prove that the works of nature have the same origin, than the similarity and congruity of principle which is so constantly apparent throughout the whole.

In the productions of art we apply this argument as a ground of proof. Thus the style of writing is considered a decisive mark of an author. The same criterion is adopted to prove, how far the books of sacred Scripture are genuine. To pursue the same method of analogy, suppose in a desert we should discover some fragments of an ancient edifice; we instantly perceive that the broken parts relate to some whole. If again, other parts be discovered, the congruity and manner of workmanship would convince us, that they also relate to the same structure, and were produced by the same artificer; and this argument so well applies to the uniform design and concordance of parts in the universe, that it should alone be sufficient to produce conviction.

The first analogy I shall mention, for all the works of nature are full of them, which by their relation shew one contriver, is that which exists between man and the vegetable world. A plant is formed of organized parts, similar

in many respects to the human frame. Plants perspire and breathe, and even undergo a suspension of their powers similar to sleep. They possess great and nice sensibilities. There is altogether such a resemblance, that a plant may be said to be an organized being, only without the power of loco-motion.

There is again, in all the process of nature, an almost undefinable gradation; for the links are so imperceptible, that they are often not to be discovered. Thus the higher species of irrational beings approach the lower of the rational. Animals that move on the surface of the earth are connected with those that mount into the air, for we have quadrupeds with wings. Fish too are provided with organs similar to these, and the amphibious unite the links of water and land animals. Again, the lower order of animated beings so melt, as it were, into the vegetable, that they become scarcely to be distinguished; and, lastly, vegetable life is connected by several characters with the animal world. Now the use I would make of these acknowledged and obvious truths is to prove, that there is a wonderful consent and gradation and harmony in all the creation, which it is impossible to suppose to have been the effect of accident. On the con-

trary we must infer that there is one grand and connected intention in all nature, which eminently displays unity of design in the Creator. To pursue these analogies further, we may remark, that they are so adapted to various circumstances, that it is impossible that any concurrence of atoms or particles could produce them. For while some are subject to infinite varieties, they conduce to one uniform plan.

In the last place I observe, that the indications of a particular interference of Providence in the works of nature are manifest.

It has been demonstrated by the great philosopher of this nation, that the perturbing powers, which take place in the solar system, must in process of time destroy the planetary motions, unless it shall please the first Mover of all to interfere and oppose this otherwise inevitable consequence. The operation of heat and cold, the continual action of the atmosphere, the violence of storms, the force that abrades, and the dissolving powers that soften the hardest substances, cannot be resisted, even by rocks and mountains. Rivers too continually convey these dissolved or broken particles into the ocean, and thus have a tendency to reduce the whole globe to a level, by filling the cavity of

waters. These are mechanical causes perpetually acting. But since the mountainous and interior parts of the globe still retain their elevation, it is evident, either that the world is of longer existence than is commonly supposed; or that some particular interposition of the Deity has preserved, and still preserves its original constitution, in opposition to these potent and mechanical actions.

But it is objected by the Atheist, that if all the appearances of nature require a cause, the existence even of the Author himself requires a cause also. It is certain that we have no conception of the origin of a first cause; for our ideas are all limited to time and space; but we have a decided proof that all the phenomena of nature have some prior origin. To that we refer. Here our inquiries must end. As we are satisfied that all things must have had a beginning, religion requires no more of us than that we should be content to acquiesce in a cause adequate to all effects. It is the pride of philosophers, in their conjectures, to find a cause for every difficulty or phenomenon; and when they have arrived at one, as the Prophet says, *they offer incense to vanity*, and are so elated with imaginary success, that they are willing to rest there. But as every cause must

have another antecedent, the advantage obtained by reaching one point is but a small advance, even if their discoveries be established by the clearest demonstration. Thus that the descent of bodies is the effect of gravity is clearly to be ascertained. Here the cause of effect is discovered. But how small is that discovery! For when we are asked, What is the cause of gravity? or what is it in itself? we are altogether at a loss for an answer; and we find ourselves still infinitely remote from the knowledge of a first cause.

Animals are destined to prey on each other; the strong on the weak. But there is a wonderful provision made by the Creator to preserve a just balance. Did superior strength, or superior cunning, always avail, the weaker kind would be soon altogether destroyed, and many a genus would be entirely lost. To counteract this, God has been pleased to make a balance of advantages or defects. The stronger creatures have their vulnerable parts, and their vulnerable parts are attacked by those who are far inferior in strength; the voracious shark, who would make a desert of the sea, is attacked and is subdued by the sword-fish; some creatures escape death by their minuteness or by flight where their larger enemies

cannot pursue, both by land, and in the water. Many huge animals are the prey of insects; so that, while one is formed for destruction, it is vulnerable by insignificant creatures: and those which from their helpless state would easily be extirpated, are kept in the catalogue of creation by their wonderful prolific powers. Here are provisions, proportioned evidently by a just balance, not merely applicable to genus or species, but to the whole creation.

Again, the goodness and particular care of Providence is very conspicuous in the provision made for several important functions of the body, by which their power is increased by a twofold provision of the most useful; the eyes for sight, the ears for hearing, and similar instances. Now in the case of accidental loss of the one organ, the other remains as a supply for the defect; and in the instance of sight, the remaining perfect organ acquires additional strength. Again, in the total privation of sight, the faculties of hearing and of touch, and the mental power of memory, are considerably increased. It is impossible, when we remark the ingenuity and the increased sensibility of the blind, their hearing, the compound nicety of their feeling, which enables them often to live

and to excel in the practice of the arts of music and others, not to be struck with the goodness of the Almighty in their capacities of improvement and substitution, by which the miseries of privation are lessened, and compensations are admirably contrived. In such instances, the hand, by increased sensibility, like the antennæ of insects, performs the office of the sight, and the memory becomes a substitute for letters.

There is a most remarkable instance of the constant superintendence of the Deity in the balance which is ever preserved between the sexes of animals, but especially of the human race. It has been determined from many accurate registers, that the proportion of male and female, born in given periods of years, is nearly the same. Here there is a proportion continually observable, and never so far deviating but that the proportion is the same in a given number of years. To account for this on any known principle is impossible. It cannot be the result of what we call accident. The law is invariable, it is beyond human control. What then can we say? Is there a mind so lost even to common sense, as not to be convinced by this unknown but astonishing influence; this regulation of events, far beyond our limited comprehension?

Equally astonishing is the proportion of things preserved, not only in the animal, but the vegetable kingdom; indeed, in all the various parts of the creation. Chemical experiments convince us, that perpetual changes are produced in nature by the operation of mutual attraction or affinities, by repulsion or solution. These combinations and changes of nature are infinite. But are not these subject to some invincible control? It seems as if there were in all bodies certain naturally constituent principles, which preserve them from such mutations as may interfere with the original types.

Lastly, From all that has been observed, it appears that the manifestations of the wisdom, the power, and the over-ruling providence of God, are so many, so distinct, and so decisive, that we may here almost be said to possess ocular demonstration. Thus *the invisible things of him from the creation of the world were clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead*; so that those who will not be convinced of the superintending providence of God, are *without excuse*.

LECTURE III.

JOHN i. 17.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

BY these words it is not meant that the law only came by Moses, and that grace and truth were not imparted by him; but that they were more clearly revealed through Christ. The ceremonial law of Moses, by the coming of the latter, was abrogated, and the moral law rendered more obligatory; consequently truth was more fully established, grace or pardon only ultimately confirmed and sealed by the atonement through the second covenant; and therefore, though truth and the promises of grace were given by Moses, they were finally confirmed by Christ.

In reviewing the Mosaic dispensation, we have now to consider its object and its evidences principally in one light, as it tends

to elucidate the consistency of the great design and disclosure of the scheme of revelation.

The connection which subsists between the Mosaic and the Christian revelation is intimate and inseparable. With these the prophetic writings, and the history of the Jews and the Gentiles, form a regular chain of agreement, of which every single link is of great importance; while the separate parts are so far connected, that they contribute to complete one grand and comprehensive scheme of providence. We find almighty wisdom and goodness prospectively employed for the human race, from the instant of creation. We observe the same goodness actively and uninterruptedly extend itself through all the various changes of human existence, and never terminating, because it promises to be so employed throughout all eternity.

This harmony and connection between the Old and New Testament is evident in every part. There are numerous analogies and relations. The first is full of types and representations of the events of the latter. Even those who are not willing to indulge in fancied images, or double interpretations, cannot deny a frequent resemblance. To mention

only this, that Moses predicted the intention of God in after-ages to raise up a prophet like unto himself, would be sufficient. But the instances are very numerous, and the whole law, and indeed all events, were *shadows of good things to come*.

The opponents of truth begin with objections to the account of creation. Various theories of the earth have been invented; some in support of Scripture, others with a view to confound it; yet it is remarkable, that if those which the pious ingenuity of the friends of religion have hitherto advanced have not been so satisfactory as might be wished, yet our adversaries have done nothing which can shake its credibility: while, happily, true philosophy has concurred to confirm, rather than to contradict, the assertions of Moses. The account, for instance, which the sacred historian gives us, that light was created antecedently to the sun, has caused no little triumph to those who are desirous of detecting improbability. Was light, say they, which emanates from the sun, created on the first day; and was the sun itself, the great source of it, created only on the fourth? This implies absolute contradiction. But if modern conjecture be well founded, and there is every

reason to confide in it, the body of the sun is not the seat of light; it is an opaque, and, probably, habitable globe; and the light which appears to flow from it proceeds from a surrounding atmosphere: and thus the matter of light might have existed before it was called into action. To dwell further on this is needless; for perhaps light, like heat, may not be actually resident in the body of the sun, but, being in a latent state dispersed throughout all the system, may be set in action by some principle that emanates from the opaque body, and thus rendered perceptible. Scripture is not to be confounded by conjectural philosophy. Let us then confide in that divine word which, in the sublime representation of revelation, spoke, *Let there be light, and there was light.*

But it may be here remarked, that the grand object of revelation was not to teach mankind philosophical, but moral truth. That the writings of Moses were not adapted to the gratification of this sort of curiosity is indeed evident. His account of the formation of the world is too concise and summary for such a purpose. Their more immediate design was of greater importance; to keep alive a true sense of the unity of the supreme Being, to preserve the world from the total darkness of

idolatry, and to impress men with practical truths, and with moral obligations founded on divine promises. The improvements of science contribute to the confirmation of his doctrines, and it is highly probable will continue to elucidate and establish them. Where then is inconsistency? Assuredly not in the Scriptures; but in objectors. They begin with the first account which Moses affords us of the creation, of the fall of man, the origin of evil, and the scheme of redemption. Now all profane history is in its commencement extremely imperfect. Many have pretended to give us a better and more clear solution of the origin of things, and the introduction of natural and moral evil into the world. They call on us for implicit belief, while they persuade us to distrust the sacred writings. But if they thus demand confidence, we must be satisfied that they have something better to offer before we can be prevailed on to renounce our own faith. Now it has happened, to the honour and credit of revealed religion, and to the mortification and shame of theoretical reasoners, that no account has yet been given, no scheme devised, so rational as that which the sacred writings have transmitted to us. The assertions contained in the Mosaic history have survived

in credit all these evanescent systems ; some of which have been grounded on the fashionable principles of the times : but as increased knowledge proved the fallacy of preceding conclusions, some have instantly sunk into neglect, and others into contempt. Yet the account given us in the sacred writings on these important subjects has stood the test of time and of inquiry, and has remained unshaken by all the efforts of human opposition.

Again, the various phenomena of nature bear testimonies to the consistency of the relation of Moses respecting the universal deluge, with the truth and probability of circumstances ; since there is no part of the globe where evident marks of great convulsions are not to be traced. The several strata of the earth, disturbed from their natural positions, and not disposed exactly in conformance to their specific gravities, make it evident and undeniable, that great changes must have taken place. By some, these are attributed to the effect of subterraneous fire ; by others, to water ; and yet nothing can be more probable than that both these causes have contributed. For as many existing volcanos, and many now extinct, decidedly prove the ravages of subterraneous fire, and as the uncontrollable force of

vapour is now well understood, it must be clear, that both these principles have been employed as the grand agents of convulsion. The Bible tells us, that the *fountains of the great deep* were broken up, and independent of revelation, the universality of the deluge is self-apparent, and is further confirmed by the traditions of all nations of the earth, whether barbarous or enlightened.

The account transmitted to us of the motives which induced the Almighty to destroy the antediluvian world is in itself highly probable, and agreeable to experience. When we look on the habits of man we must observe, that longevity has a tendency to corrupt his principles, and to indurate his feelings. In proportion as some vices lose their stimulus by age, others are considerably strengthened. Thus avarice, its parasitical companion, increases upon the failing limbs. By length of days the more tender affections lose their force: and as age was more slow in its approach in the antediluvian world, there was a longer space for the reign of turbulent passions.

Pride and ambition, it is certain, would be considerably more powerful were men conscious of a longer duration of existence. The probability of death, and the sense of natural

infirmity, serve to mortify those intolerable passions, and to render them less luxuriant; but were they not subject to these admonitions, they would be ungovernable. Longevity then would naturally strengthen bad habits, and render those more confirmed in wickedness, who had long been subject to its dominion. But further, there is a disposition in men to grow careless of reputation, and bolder in sin; by continued practice: and for these probable causes we need not wonder that wickedness should have overspread the earth.

It was supposed by ancient philosophers; and the same opinion is still maintained by some modern, that the world is of much higher antiquity than Moses asserts; that, in fact, matter is eternal; and that both this earth and human events have been subject to many and successive revolutions; but what demonstration is there to support those opinions? None. In opposition to this, it has been well answered, that we have no traces of such pre-existence; that the uncultivated state of large portions of the globe, and the erratic life of its earlier inhabitants, prove that it has been thinly peopled; that the lateness of many discoveries, and various other circumstances, corroborate the account given by Moses of the

age and history of mankind. We have no credible record of more than six thousand years from the present time. The pretensions of the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Phœnicians, or the Chinese, are decidedly unfounded. The extravagance of the Hindoo chronology has been shewn by one well qualified to judge. Thus then we have on our side confidence and demonstration. The opposite opinions possess neither.

From natural let us proceed to moral philosophy. The origin of physical evil has occasioned much inquiry; and with the Scriptures on this head scepticism is much dissatisfied. That the state of human nature is altogether frail and corrupt is undeniable; and to account for this the most absurd and extravagant systems have been framed, and especially in the various modifications of the oriental philosophy; a philosophy, no less productive of confusion to the ancient world, than of injury to the Christian religion. The Scriptures attribute the depravity of the human heart to original sin, incurred by the transgression of the first man; but objectors will not admit, that the goodness of God would suffer the transgression of one man to bring misery on the whole of his subsequent race. Such a per-

mission, according to their ideas, is incompatible with the acknowledged attributes of divine beneficence. Let us not however attempt to penetrate into those hidden mysteries, which are too intricate for human understanding, but which are confirmed by fact and experience. In such speculations men pursue the same erroneous plan which they adopt in all their inquiries concerning revealed religion. They measure infinity by limited means. The whole may be reduced to a simple statement. Death is the lot of all mankind. Evil does exist. Sin and death have entered into the world together, and reign over our mortal bodies. For the introduction of moral turpitude, reason has never been able to account. Is there then more difficulty in supposing that these existing calamities were produced by the transgression of the first man, than by any other cause? The facts cannot be disputed; and if their origin be deemed as incompatible with our ideas of the mercy of God, the same objection will be in force in whatever way we attempt to reconcile them. It is equally extraordinary and unaccountable to us, that this our present state should be beset by such evils. The objection is to its introduction; and the doubt can only be, how far such an admission be reconcileable.

to the goodness of the Creator. That God is perfect, that he is infinitely wise and merciful, is undeniable. None of the objectors have been yet able to devise any scheme which is so satisfactory as that which we derive from revelation, and we are better pleased to rely on God, than on man; who, if revelation be not true, has nothing to substitute in its place. To those who busy themselves in unprofitable researches, we must say, *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know^a?*

If we proceed to consider the doctrines revealed in the Mosaic dispensation, we find them perfectly agreeable to the best ideas which have ever been entertained of the perfections of the Deity. All history, all fact, all experience, shew us, that the propensity of mankind to idolatry, originating doubtless from natural ignorance and depravity, has been excessive, universal, and incorrigible; and from this extravagant propensity no nation has ever been free; not even the Jews themselves. For though God Almighty was pleased to work

^a Job xi. 7, 8.

successive miracles to display his power, and to keep them, if possible, constant to their duty; yet all those manifestations of power, all threats, all promises, were often ineffectual. They could not be restrained from falling occasionally into the universal error; and yet the philosopher has been fond of extolling the dignity of human nature. Nothing is however more probable, and indeed we have a demonstration on our side, that, had not God been pleased, by revelation to earlier ages, to keep a sense of his perfections alive, mankind never would have entertained worthy or true notions of him and of his attributes, antecedent to the coming of Christ; and had Christ not come, they would not even to the present day. It is evident therefore, that whatever degree of knowledge of this kind the world has entertained, is altogether to be attributed to revelation. To the philosophers of many centuries before Christ the suggestions of natural religion were a light; and some of the principles of revelation were transmitted to the Pagan world by the traditions of the patriarchs. Nothing is more difficult than to trace the origin and progress of ideas. Men are often fond of attributing to their own sagacity, and their own invention, the accidental

acquisitions derived from a foreign stock. The knowledge of a God of infinite goodness and perfection having most probably by some primitive revelation gone forth, was easily communicated, and would in an imperfect degree be intermixed with the general sentiment of mankind ; especially as they had, according to the assertion of St. Paul, a law of conscience written in their hearts. Thus it appears to have been the scheme of Providence, that all his discoveries and intimations to men should be gradual. Traditions were indistinctly opened ; then was proclaimed the first covenant, then succeeded prophecy, by degrees more and more complete and intelligible, till the whole beautiful arrangement was developed ; till the *Day Spring from on high* gradually increasing, burst forth into the meridian splendor of *the Sun of righteousness*. None of the ancient systems of philosophy have given a clear or distinct account of the one true God, or his attributes. Now the certainty of this alone is of the highest importance to mankind. If we examine the declaration of the Mosaic dispensation relative to the supreme Being, conveyed in all the instructions to the children of Israel, and all the interpositions and revelations of God, we perceive such exalted intimations,

that they fill us at once with admiration and astonishment. It would be superfluous to illustrate these by any extracts, since they abound in the sacred writings. Candour must admit, that nothing comparable to such representations of the divine nature can be found in any of the profane authors. The probable existence of a supreme Being, the Creator of all things, was indeed suggested by natural religion, but these suggestions were extremely imperfect. It is not alone the pure conception of the Deity which the Hebrew Scriptures disclose; but in all the promises proposed to the Jewish nation, as well as in the denunciations of wrath against transgression, we find the best encouragement to virtue, and the greatest discouragement to vice in general. Now idolatry was not only dishonourable to the reason of man, and an affront to the supremacy of God, but was productive of the most pernicious consequences to morals. In all the rites of Pagan worship we discover not only the grossest absurdity, not only allurements, but every stimulus to vice which sensuality or ignorance could suggest. Therefore the heathen gods, in all countries and nations, were propitiated by the commission of the most abominable crimes; for even

crimes were esteemed acceptable to the impure monsters of their worship, created by the profligacy and the superstition of mankind. The nations that bordered on Canaan, as well as its inhabitants, were addicted to religions whose ceremonies were of the most flagitious nature. Some of these worshipped the sun, and therefore thought that their children could neither be prosperous in life, nor acceptable to their idols, unless they were made to pass through fire: *They shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters*, and seduced the credulous children of Israel. As Jeremiah laments, *they built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire. They built also the high places of Baal*^b. To judge of the cruel nature of these rites, it is to be observed, that the word Tophet in the Hebrew is derived from an instrument by which the priests were accustomed to drown the cries of the victims. Now compare with this the exalted representations of the divine nature, and of the worship acceptable to him, every where expressed in the Old Testament: *a pure heart and undefiled hands*;

^b Jer. vii. 31.

mercy rather than sacrifice. Not only in these barbarous nations and barbarous ages were the worst passions and the most depraved practice encouraged, but even in nations who boasted superior knowledge and great refinement, and whom infidels are fond of extolling as worthy of imitation. Whereas the sacrifices instituted by divine appointment, being typical of a future great event, and contrived to intimate and to keep alive an expectation of the fulfilment of the last best sacrifice and satisfaction, were of the most pure and innocent nature. *Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God^c.* This sentiment is prevalent throughout the whole of the Old Testament, and the prophetic writings abound with the same. Thus Isaiah; *Bring no more vain oblations: incense is*

^c Micah vi. 6, 7, 8.

an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with^d. And again, Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow^e. And in another place, shewing the absurdity of fast and penance without good practice, Is it such a fast that I have chosen ? a day for a man to afflict his soul ? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord ? Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him ; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily : and thy righteousness shall go before thee ; and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward^f. Again, in the Psalms

^d Isaiah i. 13.

^e Ver. 16, 17.

^f Chap. lviii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

we find morality and purity perpetually inculcated. Thus: *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart* &c. Then follows the enumeration of many practical acts of justice, and other virtues. It were endless to recite the number of passages in the Old Testament where the true nature of the service which God expects from his creatures is clearly defined.

It is notorious, that in the heathen nations of Greece and of Rome the most flagrant vices were the necessary rites of initiation into their corrupt mysteries. Let us then draw the contrast. Did any of the Pagan religions afford sublime representations of the Deity, or pure precepts of virtue? Yet the precepts of Moses had a tendency not only to give to men exalted and clear conceptions of the nature of the Deity, but to ameliorate the heart, and to denounce the vengeance of the Almighty on every species of moral transgression. Did the heathen offer human sacrifices; shed the blood of their captives and their slaves; nay, even of their own children. The law of Moses re-

& Psalm xv. 1, 2.

quired only the blood of the lamb, because the type of him in whom was no sin, the immaculate and holy one. Did the heathens pollute their temples with scenes of guilt and riot, and make even a traffic of debauchery; for this was their common practice. In the Mo-
saic law, the temple of the Most High was, on the contrary, declared to be dedicated to purity. It was the residence of the holy of holies, and all pollution, all abomination was considered defilement to the sacred place. Did the law of Moses prescribe or permit immorality. Were not all the flagitious practices of the Gentiles represented as the objects of detestation, and the means of defilement? Is not the infatuation of those astonishing, who look on the religion of the old covenant with aversion, while no resentment is felt at the absurd and disgusting institutions of Polytheism? It is even probable, that idolatry was not in itself so offensive to God because it robbed him of his worship, but because it corrupted morals. The worship of imperfect beings can add to the glory of God in no other way than by the promotion of universal righteousness.

The Jews have been called a barbarous and ignorant people, unskilled in art, avaricious, and addicted to the most gross superstition.

That they were not without skill in the arts of life, is apparent from the various circumstances of their history; the building of the ark and the temple. Of Solomon it is declared, he was well versed in natural knowledge; and the acquisition of the Jews in art or science was perhaps nearly, if not equally, advanced with that of the nations of the same age. For, after all, to what did the knowledge of the ancient world amount? Some arts seem to have flourished, which subsequent ages have lost; but natural knowledge was always in a very confined state; it was the superstition of philosophy, grounded on conjecture, not on experiment. What was the astronomy of Egypt or Chaldea formed on? Systems now well known to be absolutely false. It is therefore a great mistake to consider the Israelites as comparatively barbarous, or ignorant. But if it be granted, that the children of Israel were a barbarous race, this circumstance would of itself be an argument in favour of revelation. For it is inconsistent to suppose illiterate and uncultivated men, unaided by divine instruction, to be capable of entertaining such sublime and clear ideas of God as the Jewish Scriptures contain, and which were never discovered by more civilized people. Compare the produc-

tions of Greece and Rome in the highest state of the arts ; and what shall we find in them, however excellent in other respects as models of composition, that can at all rival the Hebrew Scriptures, when the majesty, the mercy, or the holiness of the Deity are displayed ? It is in these sacred writings that we see also the purest morality inculcated ; not indeed brought to such a state of perfection as in the Gospel, but still eminently superior to the precepts of all cotemporary or known religions. For here it is necessary to separate the tenets of philosophy from sacred institutions. It has been already remarked, that philosophers were indifferent to the practice of the world out of their own immediate schools, and that the religion of the ancient world seems not to have had any immediate connection with virtue. Men were indeed taught to appease their deities, and to court their favour. How ? By rites and ceremonies ; by oblations and sacrifices. Such indeed were prescribed by God under the old covenant, but it was ever explicitly proclaimed and universally understood, that these did not dispense with the obligations of moral duty. If then no conceptions of natural religion were ever so clear, no declarations so express, as are evident in the Jewish

revelation, is it not to be concluded that the Scriptures must have derived their origin from a source superior to human ?

If while many institutions are to be found in the Jewish laws and precepts that are evidently excellent, some it must be confessed there are for which we cannot account. In reasoning on these we ought to consider them as far as possible with all their relations. Here indeed our judgment will be imperfect, because we cannot see the tendency of the whole scheme which is embraced by the unlimited providence of the divine Author. We must remember however, that of these many were peculiarly adapted to extraordinary circumstances ; to a people who were designed to be unconsciously, and often reluctantly, the instruments of preserving the knowledge of the true God, of justice, and morality in a corrupt and perverse world. As the knowledge and virtue of an individual will degenerate unless it have some example, unless it be preserved from contamination by constant vigilance ; so it is with nations, and with the whole race ; for, unless some principles of renovation be given to the moral constitution, it will decay like the physical. The law of natural conscience kept the Gentile world from total

corruption. Under the Christian dispensation we have a renovating principle, the gift of grace: and I would draw this inference, that had it not pleased God to preserve mankind by that silent but irresistible voice of conscience from total degeneracy, that law which was written in their hearts, the world would unavoidably, by the constitution of things, have fallen into an irrecoverable state of depravity. Yet if natural religion could enable us to acquire notions of morality, we ought never to lose sight of this consideration, that nothing but revelation can sanction the principles of justice and virtue among men. On the motives of natural religion they will be only a temporal convenience, adapted entirely to the improvement or accommodations of temporal life. Revelation is the bond which unites man to God, and connects our present interests with eternity.

Besides the excellent tendency of the Mosaic institution to preserve a true sense of the unity and perfections of God, which is a strong internal evidence of its origin, we may further observe, that it contained much encouragement to benevolence; notwithstanding that it prescribed many distinctions which appear to be supercilious. The unlimited law of

universal charity was promulgated more fully under the Gospel covenant: yet strangers under the old law were not altogether excluded from participating in the benefits of religion and common rites. The law admitted proselytes of the gate, as they were then called; and all the prescriptions of the old covenant were founded on a moral and religious necessity, rather to exclude the contamination of heathen ceremonies, than social intercourse; and was a necessity somewhat similar to that which the law of self-preservation compels men to adopt in preventing the contact of epidemical disease. It prescribed at the same time several charitable institutions; such as the charge recommended to the owners and keepers of the harvest, that the grain should not be collected with scrupulous parsimony, but that the poor gleaner might in quiet and with facility enjoy his portion.

The injunction given to the Israelites to possess the land of Canaan has been considered as oppressive and unjust. To this the common and obvious answer is sufficient, that Providence undeniably does frequently make use of human instruments in the moral government of the world. And in this instance the enormous impiety, and the profligacy of these peo-

ple, loudly invoked divine punishment. But it must be remembered, that on all other occasions the wars of the Jews were defensive; and they were expressly forbidden to enlarge their territories by the invasion of their neighbours. If the command of God then obliged them to act offensively as his instruments of wrath in a particular instance, and if the same law prohibited them in all others, this conclusion must at least follow, that this solitary injunction was an evident proof of particular interposition. Now suppose the command to have been from heaven, which we believe, did not this establish the right? All law is derived from some supreme power. If the Bible be at all true, it was God himself who promised and gave them possession. Their subsequent employment was agriculture, the most useful and the most innocent of all the pursuits of man. It must be confessed, that war and conquest, abstractedly considered, appear such horrid instruments, as to be inconsistent with the mercy of the Deity; and so are disease and death. Yet, as all men are subject to these evils, we must consider them on the whole as mercies. Thus if the human frame be subject to the injuries of time, death is a remedy for physical suffering; pain is the index, and the faithful

centinel of danger. And if death be gain, disease is the friend that conducts us to the gate that opens to everlasting bliss. To inflict suffering then on the human race is a merciful act of providence, if the suffering of the incorrigible lead others to repentance. Life and death are in the hands of God ; and are entirely at his disposal. There is no law of nature which exempts us from evil. If war were universally enjoined as a precept of religion, it would indeed form an objection to it : but since God is sometimes pleased to destroy by famine, by earthquake, or pestilence, we cannot object to any other mode which the divine wisdom may devise of punishing a guilty world. The whole objection must lie, not against the punishment, but the mode of its execution. Now of this the Almighty can alone determine. For if we murmur at the infliction of physical evil, we have reason to murmur at the whole course of providence, which is constituted on the certainty of its existence. An injunction to destroy is indeed suspicious, when there is no evidence of its coming from God ; but the certainty of the evidence of the injunction removes all cause of objection.

To conclude the consideration of the institu-

tions of the first covenant, that of the sabbath is alone a sufficient proof of a divine origin; an institution most admirably calculated to keep a sense of religion alive; an institution so important to society at large, and to the spiritual interests of individuals in particular, that it may be considered as a most invaluable blessing. It is the bond of religious society; the sanctifier of public order and tranquillity; the anticipater of heaven, and the guardian of individual grace and holiness. The universal violation of it would bring anarchy and destruction on a nation, and always terminates in the debauchery and ruin of individuals. The observance brings blessing and prosperity, and does more for public and private happiness than worldly wealth, or any temporal success.

It is objected to the selection which God was pleased to make of the Israelites, as instruments of his providence, that they were a small and inconsiderable people, and that they were altogether unworthy of his peculiar favour. This may be readily granted, and yet be no ground of objection; and indeed this is urged by Moses himself, when he exhorts them to obedience: *The Lord did not set his love on you, and choose you, because ye were more in*

number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people^h.

Of the instruments of Providence it is absurd to judge by our conceptions. The agency of men is evidently subject to his control, and what they design for evil purposes he converts to good. In the present system of things, no marked distinction is made of good or evil, only in their general effect. The sun shines and the rain falls alike on the just and the unjust. Nothing can be more clear, than that profane and profligate men are undeserving of the bounties of Providence; and there is as much reason to say of temporal blessings. Yet God is pleased to suffer them to enjoy much more than they merit: and why then should not the Jews have been chosen for the display of divine wisdom? In the Scripture, this people is never represented as the chosen or peculiar people of God for any merit of their own: on the contrary, in all his expostulations with them, God is represented as upbraiding them with their rebellion against an election so very extraordinary. They, it appears, were employed contrary to their own choice. Perpetual interposition was necessary to coerce and

^h Deut. vii. 7.

keep them to the service of the true God ; and their very reluctant obedience tended to the more open manifestation of the divine goodness and glory. That the Jews then were an inconsiderable people, is an argument of Moses ; but he makes a very different use of it. He employs it to awaken them to obedience, and to induce them to repose a trust in that great Being, the dispenser of so many blessings. It may be also urged, that our blessed Lord made use of ignorant fishermen as instruments to promulgate Christianity. Now that God should employ inconsiderable agents, is consonant with all the events both of nature and of human life.

To prove the consistence of the holy Scriptures, we may assert, that they form the best sources of ancient history. When we examine the books of the Old Testament, we observe that the writers, even supposing it to have been a human work, are good historians, and were spectators of many of the facts they have recorded. They appeal to circumstances seen by multitudes. We must be struck with the simplicity of the narration, and with the marks of truth they exhibit. We see the conformity of the chronology of the holy Scriptures with that of profane history ; nay, they even serve

to correct the errors of the latter. We see a surprising harmony between these books and the most valued historians, such as Josephus and others. The books of the Old Testament alone afford us an accurate history of the world from the creation, through the line of patriarchs, judges, kings, and rulers of the Hebrews. By their aid we may form almost an uninterrupted series of events down to the birth of Christ or Augustus, a space of about four thousand years, or even beyond. If a few interruptions occur, these are easily supplied by profane history. Such reflections must strike us as very extraordinary proofs of the agreement of the whole relation with truth. If it be said, that this book contains some contradictions, we have these well reconciled by several persons of ability.

Every improvement in science confirms the evidences of the Scriptures. Astronomy gives its support; so that not only the sun by day, and the splendid luminaries of the night, but every law of the celestial orbs, declares the glory of God. The heavens themselves at once prove his being, display his workmanship, and establish the truth of his divine word. Profane history contributes to confirm the truth of sacred; and, learning as it advances, clears ob-

security and elucidates truth. There have been generally standing memorials of great events; but the memorials of the events of sacred history bear this remarkable character, that they were established at the very time of the facts, and were instituted in remembrance of them. Thus all the Jewish rites, whether circumcision, the feast of the passover, the sabbath, the delivery of the law, were all appointed at the very time of the transaction; and succeeding generations acted on the testimony of their forefathers, who were present at the time of the transaction, and recorded it to posterity. For it is a strong argument of the truth and the consistence of revelation, that the principal instances recorded in the Jewish history of the miraculous acts of God performed through his human instruments, were very public; and that the institutions which arose out of them were adopted at the same time, and by the very persons who were the spectators. We have no greater evidence of any historical transaction. Here then, on the one side, we are to place well authenticated facts; on the other, speculative conjecture and groundless objection.

It is remarked of the Mosaic institutions, that they propose temporal promises, and that

they allude not to the rewards of a future life. Hence some have concluded, that a future state of reward or punishment made no part of the motives proposed to the children of Israel. It must however be remembered, that temporal promises were peculiarly adapted to the state of the Israelites, and therefore that they are more strongly enforced. But was it not the sole object of the law to prepare the Israelites for the expectation of him, who was to bring life and immortality to light? The hope of life and immortality was therefore, with the same consistence of design, gradually developed. To this nature itself pointed; in this the patriarchs trusted. A future state of existence was ever the hope of the Gentile world. Our blessed Lord did not advance, he confirmed the doctrine. With this view we are to look at the consistence of the Gospel covenant. Many passages of the Old Testament shew that it was a general belief of those times. What said Isaiah? *The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory*ⁱ. There are many similar de-

ⁱ Isaiah lx. 19.

clarations, which prove that the world was never without such an expectation. It was the general belief of the Pharisees before our Lord appeared. Neither did our Saviour assert that he was the first publisher of the doctrine; nor did the people receive it as new.

On the whole then, we have the strongest evidence of the truth of the doctrines promulgated by Moses. If we examine them minutely, difficulties may indeed arise. But it is consistent with the declarations of Scripture that such should exist; for here we are to *know only in part*. But let us take an enlarged and a comprehensive view. Let us observe a series and concurrence of the most splendid and miraculous events, detached in themselves, but great in their object; uniform in their relations, gradual in their advance, and perfect in their completion. If some things be incomprehensible and obscure, they are the hidden things of an incomprehensible God. If some of the agents employed seem to us imperfect in their conduct, this seeming objection is an evidence of the veracity and candour of the historian. All time, all events, the most astonishing miracles, have been employed in preparing a degenerate race for the

grand and ultimate object, the promised Messiah, who was to take away sin, and reconcile us to God.

LECTURE IV.

JOHN i. 17.

*For the law was given by Moses ; but grace and truth
came by Jesus Christ.*

FROM the consideration of the first covenant we are naturally led on to the second, in which we shall observe the same consistency of design. Now if it can be made to appear, as was observed of the Mosaic dispensation, that the doctrines of the New Testament contain any proposition, or recommend any practice, contrary to the received opinions of the attributes of God, this would be a reasonable cause of objection. But if a revelation contain all the characters of divinity which natural reason has agreed to be the attributes of God, then it comes impressed with the marks of its true origin. Reason however is not to be the canon of faith, but the measure of it. As the corporeal eye perceives external objects by the aid of natural light, so, by the help of reason, spiritual light communicates perception of celestial things to the soul.

The fundamental doctrine of the Scripture is, that as by the offence of the first man sin and death entered into the world, so by the righteousness of the second God was reconciled, for the sentence of condemnation had passed over all. As man is by nature, as well as by transgression, inadequate to atonement; atonement for offence was offered in the person of the Son, and that atonement accepted; so that, on the condition of faith and repentance through Christ, perfect reconciliation may be obtained. The mercy of God the Father is the primary and original cause, and the mercy and compassion of God the Son the means, who offered himself for us; and made a full, perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He is called the Saviour, the Mediator, the Author and Finisher of our salvation. St. Paul thus sums up the doctrine; *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.—But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall*

be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world; and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.—Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.—For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord^k. This account is in itself clear and intelligible;

^k Romans, chap. v.

but many questions have arisen out of it, from diversity of opinion, which have been the causes of endless dispute. Error is of luxuriant growth, and propagates abundantly. Wherever men are not content with the plain declarations of the Scriptures, but are desirous of understanding that which it is impossible should be made clear to human apprehension, the natural consequence must be infinite perplexity. In the Scriptures the gracious providence of God is called a mystery ; as indeed all that relates to him, all that he does, his wisdom and his mercy, his power and his goodness, as well as the works of his hands, are all mysterious. But we must make a distinction between the mysteries inseparable from the essence of divinity, and those which the vanity, the absurd curiosity, and the weakness of man, are for ever aiming to create. The declarations of God are plain. It is clear that man may offend ; that God may be displeased ; that a Saviour may purchase redemption for us. But when we forsake the plain sense of Scripture, and substitute our own fallible reasoning, we forsake a clear and direct path for the mazes of intricacy. Then our light is turned into darkness.

One of the great and peculiar principles of

the Christian religion is that reciprocal love between God and man which it inculcates. It gives the most positive assurance of the affection of the supreme Being for all his creatures, and demands from the creature, in return, every possible degree of reverence and regard towards the Creator. No religion that has obtained any influence over the world has declared the Almighty to be so immediately and deeply interested in the welfare of mankind. None of the heathen systems ever represented the Author of nature in so engaging a light ; yet this is perfectly consonant to reason. Equally so is it that the leading principle of religious obedience on the part of man should be love : for both these representations of the affection of God for his creatures, and the duties which ought to flow from the conviction of such obligations on the mind of man, are analogous to our present state. The natural affection of parents for their offspring is a most powerful principle of action ; and the best and most acceptable return they receive, is that obedience which springs from motives of love. The Almighty, by the Christian revelation, is represented to us as the universal, the beneficent parent of mankind. His superintendence is ever actively employed for our

good ; his wisdom in contriving the means, and his power in producing it. The visible works of God are providentially designed to operate for the use of man. For him the earth is abundant in vegetation and animal life. The air replete with health. All that can delight the external senses, all that can gratify the natural wants of our present state, is abundantly bestowed on us. But above all, infinitely above all, is our gratitude invited and claimed by that astonishing instance of almighty affection, in the revelation of his will ; in the mission of his beloved Son ; and in his offers of eternal happiness and glory.

These obligations are analogous to our present relations in life. The force of human love, whether parental or of inferior degrees, is weakened by absence, and diminished by descent. Parents commonly love their children with a stronger affection than children entertain for their parents. The passion grows weaker in every branch of human connection. In the same manner the love of the Almighty is infinitely greater than the love of any earthly parent. There is certainly no motive of human action more difficult to be preserved in a regular and constant state than this of loving.

God ; because his perfections are not the object of sense. Yet we are influenced by the sentiments of our nature to seek our own good ; and those pleasing and benevolent affections, which serve to soothe and soften the evils of life, which constitute the highest possible state of human happiness, if sublimed by constant meditation, will ultimately lead us to the knowledge of that great and good Being, who alone can gratify the wishes, and complete the substantial, the unfading happiness of the rational soul.

From the Christian dispensation alone have we acquired any exhortation to the love of the Deity. This is a principle altogether unknown to all ancient religions or philosophy. It is remarkable, that in all the Pagan systems of past, and even of the present age, fear has been the motive of divine worship. Under false religions men have served God because they dreaded his power, and were apprehensive of his vengeance. The Christian dispensation proposes its threatenings only to sinners ; but invites the good by the softest persuasion. It endeavours to excite us by amiable affections ; and as attraction is a great, yet gentle agent of the natural world, love is the softest principle that draws the soul towards God. The Scrip-

tures say, where there is perfect love there is no fear. *Perfect love casteth out fear.* It represents the Almighty as a liberal benefactor, and a most affectionate parent. It therefore claims the debt of gratitude. *We love God,* says St. John, *because he first loved us;* and in claiming every affection of the heart, it proceeds on this excellent and most reasonable principle, that *to love God is to keep his commandments.*

The sacred writings have been explicit in providing us with the means of proving our integrity in the practice of this duty, which are no less comprehensive than they are infallible. The love of God is said to consist in obeying his commands from a desire of rendering ourselves pleasing to him. Our motive of practical virtue must therefore be a preference for good; because it is acceptable to that great Being who is the object of our most sincere affection; and this is not only the most certain test of our resolution, but it is also the best security against sin.

As the design which the Christian scheme proposes is of the first importance, it is consistent with the most exalted attributes of a Deity. To advance the intellectual nature of man, to improve his moral faculties, and to

tender him fit for a better state of enjoyment; to enable him to grow in grace here, and to arrive at perfection of goodness and happiness hereafter, are the ultimate objects of all that revelation promises; and this design is consistent with our best conceptions of infinite wisdom and infinite goodness. In promoting these it displays the care of the supreme Being for his creatures. It displays an interest antecedent to creation, and exerted without intermission from age to age. To this grand design a series of extraordinary events uniformly contributes. Nothing, however minute, is in reality of small importance; nothing is irregular or discordant. With this view the system of the world was framed. Heaven is interested. God the Father sacrifices his only and beloved Son: God the Son becomes the voluntary sacrifice; and the Spirit of God sanctifies the whole. Time is employed in the completion of the scheme, and eternity is to supply exhaustless mercies. To this all the transactions of the world evidently contribute, and to this end they uniformly concur. Prophecy predicts, and events realize the prediction. The powers of this world are unconsciously or even reluctantly instrumental. Whether empires rise, or kingdoms fall; whether the just suffer,

or the wicked triumph ; whether faints are martyred, or infidels persecute ; still the kingdom of Christ is advancing. The gates of hell cannot prevail against it, and even death itself is swallowed up in victory. Yet here ungrateful and sullen Infidelity offers its objections.—Why did God permit man to fall ? Why not preserve him by a superintendent coercion ? Is not this a counteraction of the first design ?—The answer must be, that it is impossible for finite reason to comprehend how far omniscience and omnipotence may concur ; how far omnipotence may choose to become subject to contingencies. But we ought to acknowledge the mercy proposed, and cheerfully to accept it, because it comes to us with all the marks of consistent analogy. We might with equal reason object to the use of food, because we know not exactly how it operates in the system to afford nutriment. We might also refrain from it on the same ground, because God has not so created us as to exist without the necessity of this perpetual renovation. In the production of these great events we see the apparatus splendid, and the more subordinate parts consistent : all like the works of God ; all analogous to his operations in nature. Is there any system of religion in which the

design is so uniformly progressive, and the events so admirably effective? In comparison of this, how mean are the pretensions of the Arabian prophet! the superstition of the Hindoo! the absurdities of the polytheism of Greece and of Rome! Indeed all are too mean to be put in competition.

If we attend to the threats and rewards which the Christian religion proposes, we find that they are merely conditional. It presses none into its service who are not voluntary disciples. It is not a plan of coercion, but of co-operation. For God only worketh together with those who themselves work. All is left to the determination and the conduct of the will. It proclaims no necessity but a freedom of action, and calls us to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It speaks of this life as a state of trial; and while we are exhorted to resist temptation, we are taught to expect it. We are to experience wars without, and fightings within. All this supposes us not exempt from the sufferings of other men, but we are even exposed to greater trials. The divine grace is to be our aid, and the holy Spirit our comforter; but though the assistance is supernatural, its action is gentle, and perceptible only in its effects. We are told, that we must

act as ordinary men, and engage as such in the general system of life. If Christians therefore prove better than other men, it must proceed from their own application of the grace bestowed by Heaven. It is indeed reasonably to be expected that men will act as men, because all this is foretold, and against all this are we not frequently forewarned? The world and its interests are powerful; and though God could force men into virtue, that would be to destroy its merit. And as the motives of Christianity are not coercive, and its operation on the mind gentle, its progress must be expected to be gradual.

Having considered some of the principal characteristics of the Christian religion, let us now proceed to its internal evidences. Of the superiority of the writings of the Old Testament in their sublime representations of the Deity, and the moral state of man, we have treated. We must now proceed to consider the consistence and the internal evidence of the writings included in what is called the New Testament, in which we shall perceive the same wonderful accordance and superiority.

Whoever attentively and impartially peruses them, must observe the most decisive marks of internal authenticity. This character, though

obvious in the books of the Old Testament, is more peculiarly so in those of the New. By authenticity here I mean, not only the genuine signs of the style of the writers, but that evident character, that colour and testimony of truth, which always carries with it a commanding and irresistible authority : all this too corroborated by circumstances both external and collateral. Of the external proofs of the authenticity of the holy Scriptures it does not fall within my province to treat. This subject has received the most ample and satisfactory testimony from many able writers. There is no history which affords such impressive demonstration, while the more important and subordinate parts contribute to general support and confirmation. In considering the consistency of the sacred Scriptures, an appeal must be made to the candid mind. To such, a few instances of apparent discordance will not be a formidable objection, even if found in the books of the Evangelists. These have been again and again rectified by competent defenders. And should their attempts at reconciliation not appear in every instance altogether satisfactory, yet these variations in the narrative, which may thus seem not fully adjusted, though the greater part are clearly ex-

plained, cannot raise any material objection, unless with those who are disposed to magnify every scruple. With such indeed there is no reasoning. To dwell on trivial objections is the poor employment of minute criticism. These slight incongruities must impress us with a conviction of the veracity of the narrators. They prove that no collusion could have existed between them, and that they did not conspire to deceive.

It would be impossible to enter into a discussion on this subject within our prescribed limits. It is only proposed at present to observe, that in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles there is such an agreement with all circumstances of the contemporary customs and manners, that it gives the most lively colour of probability to the facts which are related.

Let us consider the difficulties of fiction. The greatest effort of human genius is delineation of individual character. To discriminate this amid various combinations, and to preserve it whole, "*simplex et unum*," in a succession of changing circumstances, requires extraordinary powers of mind. In comparison with this, general description, however sublime, is inferior, because generalities may strike the ruder ages, and require no nice distinction or observation.

In combination of peculiarities the greatest poets and historians have excelled ; for this demands exquisite knowledge of the passions, and their mode of operation in all the versatilities and occurrences of life. It is in this power that the father of poets is so eminent, and in which his Roman imitator is inferior. The heroes of the former are not only great, but they are depicted with all the distinct peculiarities and marks, and colour and shades, of individual likeness. The effect of this power is to give an air of probability even to fiction. Yet in the fabulous works of human genius inconsistency will ever be found. But the admirable and clear manner, by which the several characters introduced in the Gospel history are marked and preserved, must forcibly strike us. Such accuracy human invention could never attain. It is obvious that the writers differ materially from each other in style, in language, and even in their mode of thinking. They shew not the least attempt at concealment even of their own characters, weaknesses, misconceptions, or errors ; and yet they wonderfully concur in all their descriptions of the manners and characters of others. In all this there is the evident stamp of genuine simplicity and truth. We must infer, that they were

animated by the same spirit. In the fictitious delineation of a perfect character there is no difficulty. The natural insipidity of such a picture renders it easily attainable by writers of the meanest capacity. To paint the undaunted hero, or the blameless man, requires neither talent or effort of the mind. But when human genius is employed in delineating the character of divinity, it sinks under the weight of the subject, and all its faculties become paralysed. Yet we see the four Evangelists, who were originally illiterate, delineating the Redeemer of mankind, in whose person divinity and human feelings were mysteriously blended, with such sublime simplicity, with such faithful unity of character, with such success, and such equal and coincidental harmony, as is truly astonishing, and bespeaks an excellence altogether unrivalled and more than mortal. We behold a portrait that raises ideas of the utmost perfection, that inspires the deepest reverence, and fills the mind with conceptions far above human. Does our Lord exert his miraculous powers ; how godlike is that operation ! how great the effect ! Does he call the dead from the silent tomb, and exclaim, I say unto thee, Awake—arise ; does he still the raging of the stormy waves, and exclaim, Peace, be still ; how

sublime is the expression ! And how is this related which strikes us with such wonderful force ? In a manner the most simple ; in language the most unadorned, yet forcible, convincing, and inimitable. All is unaffected, yet all grand in the extreme. Accordingly we read, " Fear and astonishment fell on all that heard, " and on all that beheld." It is not intended, in these observations, to consider the sacred Scriptures as efforts of composition, but to shew how infinitely superior they are, how far more successful than the most arduous labours of human genius. We have here the strongest internal evidence that the facts are genuine, since no fiction could produce such harmony. We find four separate writers concurring to delineate the express image and brightness of the Father, the awful transactions of incarnate divinity. Here we must confess powers far more transcendent than any which have ever astonished and delighted the world. This character of dignified simplicity ; this harmony and consistence, which constitute the signs of a nature more than human, is in no instance more admirably and perfectly displayed than in the character of our blessed Lord himself. How shall we be able to sum up the many exemplifications of excellence which united to

form this perfect whole ? When we view the Son of God divested of the glory which he had with the Father before the world ; when we see him in the likeness of man, subject to our sufferings and partaker of our infirmities ; when we compare him with all those illustrious characters who have given splendour to history, and who have laboured to render themselves models of human perfection ; when we view him opposed to all who have proudly assumed the name of philosophers, and have studied to render themselves examples of virtue ; how does the Son of the Highest rise in the comparison ! How do they sink ! How glorious, how great, how manifest his superiority ! How evident their imperfection ! In the most eminent of the ancient philosophers there is an evident affectation of singularity. How unequal are their pretensions ! Their virtues are mingled with many imperfections ; their conceptions tinged with absurdity ; their charity narrowed by a spirit of contention ; their disputes conducted with a supercilious desire of victory, rather than of truth. How full of ostentation are their precepts ! True excellence possesses indeed a consciousness of superiority, but it is always tempered with the most unassuming meekness. This is one of the strongest marks

of intellectual preeminence. How conspicuous is this in all the works, the conduct, in all the discourse of the blessed Jesus! With the fairest and the best pretence to the applause of mankind, he sought only to give glory to God. In delivering his admirable lessons he spoke indeed as *one who had authority* and as *never man spake*; yet his sole object was, not to win the admiration, but to promote the salvation of mankind. He sought no praise, no glory for himself. All was done from motives of a higher kind. Sometimes his censures were severe. But even this is a proof of the dignity of his character. Having an authority infinitely higher than human, knowing the hearts and the very thoughts, he could not but discern who merited his reprehensions, and how great were the enormities of offenders. Here mildness would have been inconsistent with the dignity of his mission; and, while he understood more than man, he could not but act as the intimate of heaven. While therefore with an omnipotent arm he controls all nature, animate or inanimate, nay the grave itself hears his voice, yet he disclaims all glory for himself. How astonishing is his humility! how immutable his goodness! how amiable his compassion! how dignified his

whole character and deportment ! In all he did, in all he said, we see the example of the perfection which men ought to endeavour to imitate ; though human nature can never attain it. So astonishing are the proofs of his power, that to suppose him merely man appears inconsistent with such extraordinary gifts. The whole of his addresses to the Father, and all the declarations he makes of himself, give us reason to apprehend, that the union between him and the Father is of a mysterious and intimate nature. They give us reason to apprehend, that his power was not merely delegated, but inherent. Though he had many disciples, yet he did not form them into a school to exalt his name ; on the contrary, he told them, that his sayings were too hard for them to understand. He taught rather for mankind than for them, and they were only enlightened when they were to behold his face no more. So far was he from assuming the character of a leader, that he foretold them, that his death would be necessary for the confirmation of his doctrines. To suffer for truth has indeed been the fate of many innocent persons ; but then death was not necessary for the confirmation of their doctrines. The death of Socrates gave time for prejudice to subside, and for deliberation to

ascertain the injustice of his condemnation. In this too was manifested the innocence of Jesus, and the iniquity of his accusers. But did the disciples of Socrates, from the circumstance of his death, consequently acquire new light, or better comprehend his instructions? Our Lord told his disciples, that another teacher would come, the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, who should teach them all things. His doctrines became more luminous, even when he could no longer teach; and he could obtain only posthumous praise. His doctrines were never delivered in writing, but were left to float on the mind of the hearers till they should be fixed by the irresistible impulse of the divine Spirit. Mahomet attentively compiled his Koran; but our blessed Lord left his instructions to the care of Almighty Providence; they were to be transmitted by spiritual inscription, not only to the sight, but to be written in the heart. To sum up the whole, we find that the character of our Lord is in perfect conformity with all the predictions relative to the promised Messiah.

But further, the same consistence is apparent in the description of the characters of the disciples, as delivered to us by the Evangelists. Before they had received the gift of the holy

Spirit, we perceive them, in every transaction, acting as uneducated men, and in their conversation and ideas we may trace all the common prejudices of ignorant minds. Yet in these there is a variety of character. Peter is sanguine and vehement; Thomas incredulous and obstinate; John meek and affectionate. In Peter is contrasted a timidity in the hour of danger, and a weakness under trial. This is extremely natural; for sanguine tempers generally fall into the opposite extreme under a change of circumstances. Hence his flight when our Lord was about to be apprehended, and his subsequent denial of his Master; following after him at a distance, though he had several times sworn to die with him. The same characters they in some measure retained after the descent of the Holy Ghost; though that great event inspired them with extraordinary powers and very different and more elevated sentiments. Yet we still distinguish the prevalence of natural habit. In some of the incidental persons of the sacred history we trace the same discrimination of character. Martha, the sister of Lazarus, is impatient, active, and sedulous: Mary gentle and attentive. The conduct of Pontius Pilate, in the sacrifice of private opinion to popular prejudices and to self-interest, is exactly what

we see every day exemplified in the intercourse of the world. Even the treachery of Judas is represented to us in a probable and natural manner. He was led to enormous wickedness by the gradual process of vice. He was not even at first aware of the full extent and of all the evil consequences of his engagement with the rulers, and was a deluded instrument of their malice. This seems to be probable from his desire of returning the price of his guilt, and from his subsequent compunction and agony of mind, which led to suicide; the too common and dreadful refuge of intolerable anguish. It is further a proof of the fidelity and consistence of the sacred writers, that they describe, on all occasions, the conduct of the several sects of the Jews in a manner exactly conformable to their well-known characters. The haughty and intolerant Pharisee, the disputatious Scribe, the infidel Sadducee, never act or speak inconsistently with their prejudices or their habits.

There is another circumstance in the history of the New Testament, which adds to its probability. A principal motive with the Jewish rulers to discourage the doctrines of our Lord, was the apprehension of losing their temporal

authority, and that mean but too common disposition of mankind to court usurpation. The Roman power was indifferent to the question, whether Jesus was the expected Messiah of the Jews. It was the policy of that people to indulge all whom they conquered with the full enjoyment of their religious superstitions and attachments. As religion and morals had little connection in their own system, all religions were alike to them which did not interfere with the civil power. The priests and rulers however made that use of the indulgence which was most advantageous to their peculiar interests. They affected to identify the doctrines of our blessed Saviour with the Roman government, exclaiming; *Whoever calleth himself a king is not the friend of Cæsar*. Our Lord had never spoken of his kingdom in any other than a metaphorical sense; and that kingdom he expressly declared was not of this world. But it suited their purposes to insist on the literal explanation. They therefore pretended to be zealous in the cause of their oppressor. This conformance to the general practice of the world must be allowed to give an air of probability to the sacred history. If in the events recorded by

the Evangelists any thing contrary to nature had been advanced, it would have weakened the credibility of their narrations.

The parables and the discourses of our Lord, transmitted to us by the Evangelists, must be allowed to be incomparable specimens of concentrated wisdom, by those who may be disposed to consider them in no higher point of view than human. But what human power has ever reached to such excellence? Decidedly none. This then is the wisdom that is from above. It is remarkable of these, that, while they contain all the doctrines of belief, they form canons of morality, and serve to prove, on this first authority, the folly of those who consider moral topics beneath the dignity of the preacher, or the faith of the Christian. The sermon on the mount would alone confute the error of such an opinion; but we have in the Gospels repeated examples to justify those, whose employment it is to instruct in recommending the duties of life, and confirming them by the sanctions of religion. The parables delivered by our Lord are at once comprehensive and concise, instructive and intelligible; and even where the application is not immediately clear, it is supplied by our divine Instructor himself. It ought to excite

our admiration, that, though they may sometimes not be instantly obvious, yet that, when thus explained, we perceive the excellence of the plan, which is so finely contrived as to form the most convenient vehicle for instruction. No mode of teaching is so concise, so comprehensive, or so useful, as parables: for these make a ready and a durable impression on the memory; and as apparent outlines in vision give shape and distinctness to bodies, so these embody and more forcibly impress the several duties of life on the mind. These are some of the evidences of the truth of the Christian revelation. When we turn our eyes to the events recorded in the New Testament; when we read of the angelic host proclaiming, *Peace on earth, and good will towards men*; when we behold the Redeemer of mankind opening the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, or loosing the tongue of the dumb, and even calling the dead from the grave; when we see him nailed on the cross; when the land is darkened; when we feel the agitation of the earth, and all nature bearing testimony to the truth of its God; and lastly, when we see the Holy One, *having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it*, and ascending into

heaven crowned with the glory and the majesty on high; ought not every knee to bow down, and every tongue to confess that Jesus was the Son of God?

LECTURE V.

ACTS ii. 22.

*Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you,
by miracles, and wonders, and signs.*

HAVING considered the consistency of the Mosaic and Christian revelations, I now propose to offer a few remarks on the miracles and prophecies which connect the two dispensations.

To begin with the subject of miracles; a species of evidence, in which it must be allowed that there is no analogy to a general providence; for these are deviations from that ordinary course, by which he is pleased to conduct the works of nature. This evidence is much disputed, and reluctantly received, not only by those who possess *an evil heart of unbelief*, but by those who can comprehend that only which immediately operates on the external senses. As St. Paul asked, when plead-

ing before Agrippa ^a, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?* the same mode of interrogation may be applied to those who deny this extraordinary interposition in his moral government. Why should it be thought incredible that God should work a miracle for any special purpose? In both cases it must obviously strike us, that the cause is more than equal to the effect. In the mechanism of nature, as well as of art, we can always suppose an effect, to which an adequate cause can be assigned. This will apply to miracles. There are none affirmed in the Scriptures to have been performed which are beyond the power, or inconsistent with the attributes of God. To cause a temporary suspension, or derangement, or inversion of the laws of nature, is a less effort of Omnipotence than creation, or the appointment of those laws. He who gave life, and contrived so exquisitely all its functions, may, if he please, arrest their operation, or restore it when destroyed. This admits of no dispute; and therefore the objections of sceptics are rather raised against the probability than the possibility of a miracle. Now the

^a Acts xxvi. 8.

most obvious answer to this may be, that, since the possibility is granted, we cannot refuse assent to the probability, provided the occasion or the object of any miraculous interference of the Deity be of such importance as to require a particular suspension or diversion of the ordinary course of providence, and if the object alleged be consistent with those great and essential attributes, wisdom, mercy, and justice. It has been urged with some appearance of plausibility, that our own experience of the regularity of nature is sufficient to invalidate any testimony that may be brought in favour of a miracle.

This however is to oppose particular experience to universal; a portion of existence to all the ages of mankind. For what may not have been perceived by one individual, may have been experienced by many; what may not have occurred in one generation, may frequently have been witnessed in others antecedent. Of collective experience it is impossible to speak decidedly, because that may be well known to an individual, or to many individuals, which has never been communicated to others; and there is no universal register of experience.

Nor is it a sufficient confutation of any fact,

to assert that it has not been submitted to particular observation. We have no means of ocular testimony for any historical circumstance, and for the truth of such circumstances we must trust to the records of former ages. Volcanos have existed in many parts of the globe, which are now extinct: yet here the phenomena of nature concur to establish our belief in their existence. Our faith is here determined by analogy, by considerable probability, but altogether without particular experience.

They who oppose the credibility of a miracle seem to forget that the origin of all created things must have been miraculous; that is, contrary to human experience. For the origin of the creation of man, either we must trust to imaginary speculation, or to the declarations of the Scriptures: for nothing is more clear, than that the original parent could not have existed from infancy to maturity without supernatural aid; for of all animals man is the most helpless in the early part of existence. The human mind too is progressive, and collects and forms all its ideas gradually, and could therefore only arrive at understanding by some miraculous interposition of almighty wisdom. It is evident therefore, that

the first parents of the human species could not have subsisted in a state of infancy, unless by some particular interference of Providence ; it is therefore certain that they must have been created, as the Scriptures represent, in a state both of corporeal and mental maturity. The same observation will apply to many species of animals. Here then we have an absolute demonstration of the existence of miracles ; and thus we may safely conclude, that God, having at first produced all the creation by miracles, might have successively employed similar interpositions.

Both the Jewish and Christian dispensations have been subject to discussion of the same kind. Their miracles, and indeed all their evidences, meet with objectors of the same temper. They were equally disputed and distrusted. Their authority was equally called in question. But the same remark may be made on both, that from their nature they could not have been the effect of any collusion.

On the subject of miracles it is impossible to enter into a detail ; but their general necessity in ages antecedent to the establishment of Christianity must be obvious. When events proceed in a natural course, they produce little effect on the human mind. Thus the rising

and setting of the sun, the succession of seasons, and all that is regular in nature, goes on without exciting emotions of gratitude or seriousness. But earthquakes, tempests, and other destructive and terrific phenomena, awaken extraordinary emotions, and bring us from sensuality to God. In the history of the Jewish nation we find that nothing but particular manifestations of divine power could restrain them from idolatry. The miraculous interposition of the Deity has therefore a tendency to make impressions which could never be effected by regular process or operation. But even miracles, if too frequent, would cause at length very little emotion; for it is surprising to observe how soon the mind grows calm, and even becomes callous under extraordinary calamities. Thus we look on death, the most awful of human events, with indifference. The great historian of Athens has informed us, that in the pestilence which visited that city during the first Peloponnesian war, the sufferers grew more emboldened in vice, and seemed anxious to fill up the short measure of their supposed days with licentiousness. We have the same accounts of other cities under similar circumstances. The inference I would draw is, not that such ex-

traordinary events are void of terror, but that they cease to be so by long succession. For in these instances the effect at first was very considerable; and therefore it is easy to understand why the Almighty should sometimes depart from the ordinary course of nature, and why these deviations should seldom occur.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of prophecy, which may be considered a species of miracle; the one is indeed an instantaneous effort of divine power, the other gradual, but equally stupendous. The various and surprising coincidences which occur between the written word and the events which it predicted, are such as must at least deserve the attention of all who are capable of thinking. There is another circumstance which unites the consideration of this subject immediately with the design of these Lectures, the regular and consistent plan of the Deity in the prediction and fulfilment of events. Prophecy begins instantly with the fall, it proceeds in a connected series of circumstances, and looks forward to the final consummation of all things. This series of prophecy, if not exactly regular in consequence, is so in connection. No great events, which relate to the œconomy

of the scheme of redemption, are unconnected or independent of prophecy. This divine spirit pervades all the course of history, is employed in all the agency of the divine procedure, and in the process of time continually develops new proofs of its prospective views. It consoles fallen and afflicted man with the hope, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. It forewarns him of the demolition of the wicked by the universal deluge. It accompanies the righteous, and predicts the fate of the renovated world. It foretells the events which should console the descendants of Abraham. It pictures the fortunes of the sons of Israel. It is the comfort, the counsellor, and the director, of the chosen but irresolute and inconstant people of God. It anticipates the most glorious and the most splendid events. Nor is the Gentile world forgotten. Their fate is predicted. The sun is darkened, according to the peculiar and sacred language of this predictive spirit, the moon is turned into blood, the stars fall, the heavens are shaken, and the earth is moved; empires and kingdoms fall, flourishing cities become ruinous heaps: but all these powerful effects are the consequence of woes long and exactly foretold.

The same spirit of prophecy accompanies all the most illustrious events of Christian salvation. It prepares the world for its Saviour. It speaks in the voice that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye a highway for your God. It utters itself in the words of Him who spake as never man spake. It is born in the first words of consolation, which God is pleased to vouchsafe to console the afflicted transgressor. It lives through the whole scheme of redemption, and will only end with the dissolution of all created things, and be swallowed up in the last triumph over the reign of sin and of death.

As the Almighty was pleased under the first dispensation to display his power, and to prove the authority of his messengers by miracles, it must be reasonable to expect that the second covenant should be attested by the same external signs. What Moses and the prophets did to prove their divine commission, it was consistent that Christ should effect; for without proofs equally signal and equally demonstrative of authority more than human, the Saviour of mankind would have appeared to the eyes of the world, not only with diminished lustre, but with inferior power; and he could not have been that prophet which the Legislator of Israel predicted should be like unto himself.

Those who believed in the power of Moses would not have trusted in Christ, had he appeared inferior to him in the marks or signs of his commission. The humility of his station was always an objection urged by the vain-glorious, by those who expected and were enamoured with the power of an earthly prince; and all the wisdom of Jesus would have been of no avail without his power of working miracles. Indeed our blessed Lord made this appeal himself to the world: *Though ye believe not me, believe the works.* The advocates of revealed religion have ever considered the completion of prophecy as an incontestable proof of the divine origin of their faith. The enemies of Christianity, conscious of the force of this argument, have endeavoured to invalidate the authority of an evidence which they cannot deny, and to lessen the credibility of those facts which they cannot disprove.

But as there is a strong resemblance between the circumstances of history and the predictions which foretold them, which they were unable to disavow, Porphyry, who flourished in the third century, boldly affirmed that the predictions of the sacred history were written after the events; and he gave this reason, that the Jewish prophecies were more like

a narrative of past transactions, than a prospectus of future events. To answer this objection, nothing more is necessary than to prove from historical evidence that this assertion was ill-grounded.

It is incontrovertible, that the Macedonian empire was posterior to the predictions of its rise and fall in the prophecies of Daniel; and that the Roman conquests were obtained long after the death of the same illustrious prophet. The truth of prophecy might be doubtful, if the events foretold were not numerous. A fortuitous concurrence of a few circumstances might possibly happen.

The agreement of many cannot naturally be expected, but the exact completion of the far greater part must be considered as miraculous. Let us attend to this unanswerable and convincing argument; for how is it possible, unless by some unhappy infatuation, to disbelieve all the remarkable predictions of the holy Scriptures? In those sacred books we may discern the history of all the important scenes which have been transacted on the great theatre of the world displayed in the most luminous characters. You may there behold all the consequent events of history wonderfully delineated, though not understood until their com-

pletion ; like the vegetable embryo, which contains the principles of all future ramification, and which, as favourable seasons advance, gradually discloses and expands.

Thus the arcana of sacred and profane history were wonderfully proclaimed by the word of God, in the writings of his inspired prophets, though beyond the power of human penetration. But as the events are transacted, the resemblance is gradually discovered. All becomes evident and indisputable. Our scruples are swallowed up in certainty, and infidelity converted into admiration.

It is indeed probable, that those who were employed in proclaiming the predictions were often ignorant, or at least had only obscure conceptions of future circumstances. That the great outlines of sacred and profane history are all delineated in the oracles of divine wisdom, is a circumstance too obvious to be denied by the candid ; but the injudicious vanity of speculators has contributed in a great measure to weaken the dignity of prophecy. They have not waited for the gradual disclosure of events ; but have even been adapting circumstances to a prophecy from their own imagination, attempting to draw resemblances where in fact there is little, or even no trace of a likeness.

But by premature conjectures they perplex themselves and discourage others.

Now it is evident that a prophecy is only known by the event; and where the event is fully completed, the likeness is so striking that it cannot be mistaken. But the ambition of discovery leads man to fancy resemblances to prove the similitude, while the prophecy is yet in a state of advance. They judge by equivocal and fallible symptoms. In the prophetic declarations we are to admire the coincidence of the events with the prophecy. Thus, that Babylon should become a waste; that the pride of Tyre should fall; is not in itself miraculous: for we allow with the unbeliever, that similar circumstances have happened, and that many cities, and even kingdoms, in the revolution of events, have sunk from a state of pride and grandeur into insignificance. But the circumstance to be admired is, that the event should exactly correspond with its prediction. Babylon or Tyre destroyed, or Nineveh or Jerusalem wasted, are not so much the subject of wonder: but that after the prediction Babylon and Jerusalem should have suffered after the manner foretold, is extraordinary, and by this coincidence the miracle is confirmed.

The sole question therefore is, whether the predictions were subsequent to the events, or whether they preceded them. The perverse and determined infidel will always plead, that our evidence is not satisfactory, or our assertions not sufficiently well attested. But when it may be proved, that the circumstances which the sacred historians have prophesied are yet transacting in the world, are fulfilling at the present hour; candour must necessarily acquiesce in the truth of a revelation, supported by such undeniable facts. We must consider the present state of the Jewish nation as one of the most convincing arguments in favour of Christianity.

At this considerable distance of time we can no longer doubt the circumstances of the prediction. We must look with an awful reverence on those sacred characters who have foretold the events of which we are now the spectators. We have only to look around and be convinced. The temporal interests of those who predicted them, if such they had, have long been annihilated, and all their hopes of fame, of honour, and of profit, have been buried in the grave. We must now be convinced that they were alone influenced by the divine Spirit, and by that genuine and honest

love of truth which it inspires. We may acquire conviction of the certainty of the divine promises in the actual transaction of his providence, at once undeniable, manifest, and intelligible. Here indeed the immediate influence has not been perceptible, though its effects are certain. The divine agency has operated on the minds of men; their artful schemes of ambition, and their restless dispositions, have all been subservient to the secret purposes of his comprehensive providence.

It is an observation of our blessed Saviour himself, that a wicked and perverse generation asketh for a sign. A sign we have. We see a nation wonderfully preserved for numerous centuries, and widely dispersed all over the surface of the globe, yet miraculously kept distinct from all others with which they have been intermixed; oppressed, yet subsisting agreeably to the divine predictions. As in nature there are particles of bodies which remain inviolable, however combined; so these extraordinary people, dispersed throughout every climate, and amidst every nation, have been attracted to each other by a wonderful power of subsistence, though ever subject to the arbitrary impositions, the tyranny and oppression, the persecution and hatred, of all man-

kind. They have multiplied under attempts to effect their extirpation; and whilst the government and manners, and customs and religions of other nations, have been continually fluctuating, they have only remained attached to the same obstinate principles, to the same inflexible habits. It was the request of the rich man in the parable, while from the seat of torment he viewed Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, that he would send one from the dead to his brethren, to warn them to flee from the wrath to come, lest they also should go into that place of torment. The request was founded on a supposition, that a message from the dead would enforce a degree of conviction which no other arguments could produce. But his demand received this remarkable answer; *They have Moses and the prophets.* And when the petition was again repeated, that if one rose from the dead they would repent; it was added, *If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* But with what additional force may not this argument be pressed on us! We have not only Moses and the prophets, but we have the actual completion of their predictions to confirm our faith. We are in possession of evidence

which those who lived in the generation of prophets could not obtain, and therefore the observation of our great Redeemer may be applied to us in a most obvious sense; that many great and wise men have desired to see the things which we see, and have not been able to view them. In a word, let scepticism attempt to invalidate all the evidences of Christianity, yet this it cannot destroy: conviction is here established on a firm basis. The kings of the earth and the rulers have taken counsel together to destroy the standing and perpetual proof of the divine truth; but they have not prevailed. The Jews are an everlasting and signal instance of the power of God; he has scattered them in his wrath, according to the declarations of his anger. Whilst we thus behold the operations of his power, and the immutability of his truth, we must bow down in awful devotion. But there is also a strong evidence in the history of the Jews; they have subsisted not only contrary to all human experience, but by such means as have proved the subversion of other civilized nations of the world. That any people should exist as a distinct society under those circumstances which would naturally tend to confound them, is certainly to be considered as

miraculous: and that the Jews have continued to the present moment unmixed, and contrary to all example, we must acknowledge. Let us for a moment take a concise view of the most memorable transactions which have dignified the pages of history. The first empire, of which any certain traces have been discovered by profane historians, amidst the dark and unenlightened ages of the barbarous world, is that of Assyria. During this period the Jewish nation was forced into a wretched captivity; but they were restored about seventy years after by Cyrus, who united the Persian and Median kingdoms, and subverted the empire of Babylon. But his degenerate successors were too effeminate to maintain the empire of Persia which he had established, and the last fell a sacrifice to the talents of Alexander the Great, and to the superior military conduct of the Macedonians. The empire however which Alexander had raised did not long subsist. Immediately on his death it became convulsed and divided by the separate interests and jealous claims of his generals, and after various revolutions was finally destroyed by the Romans. The Roman empire, which by its massy weight had crushed the rest of the world, and like a torrent had borne down all

opposition, at length began to languish ; and when its force was spent, it was overcome by more powerful and numerous streams. Now in all these remarkable events, which are usually called the four great monarchies, what traces are there of the people who composed them ? Where are the Assyrians, the Macedonians, the Greeks or Romans ? Yet the Jews still subsist. The former are undistinguished in the common mass of mankind ; yet the Jews are a distinct people, though mingled with the nations of the earth, like a drop of oil, which, though diffused on an ocean of water, by its repulsive power remains unmixed. In the usual revolutions of kingdoms all traces of the aboriginal inhabitants have been lost. But the Jewish people are yet distinguishable, are still descendants of the same origin, and are preserved amidst every circumstance, which in the natural course of things would tend to confound them with all other nations. Let us acknowledge the miraculous interposition of a divine Providence in those striking instances, and may the contemplation of it confirm and establish our faith : may it teach us to look forward with the most ardent expectation and earnest hope to that glorious manifestation of his power, when not only the Jews, but all

the nations of the world, shall bow the knee
to the name of Jesus, and all be united into
one fold, and under one Shepherd !

LECTURE VI.

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

WHILE the present generation, in common with all that have preceded it, is too prolific of infidelity ; while there are many who will not labour to study the principles of Christianity ; while others treat it with open contempt, or cold indifference ; a description of character abounds diametrically opposite. As some are disposed to believe nothing, these latter profess implicitly to receive every thing, and are believers by intuition. They ask for no evidence ; they reject reason as useless, and even profane ; and trust only to certain inward and equivocal feelings. They pretend not to be as other men are, but to have received assurance of justification. They act only from an internal, though imaginary impulse, while the

Holy Spirit is supposed partially to descend with irresistible influence on their minds. Thus wrapt in visionary possession, they conceive themselves raised above ordinary men, and to require none of those aids which are indispensable to common mortals. Such irresistible influence would indeed render not only evidence and argument superfluous, but even religious practice. For of what avail are ordinances, if men can be saved by instantaneous conversion? But should this be a mistake, is not their delusion dangerous to themselves? To the rest of mankind such sentiments are pernicious; and it becomes the friends of rational religion to combat and expose such unfounded presumption. A wild spirit of enthusiasm is no where encouraged by the doctrines and the example of the meek and submissive Redeemer; neither by the conduct or the writings of his Evangelists or Apostles; nor sanctioned by the articles of our Church.

Having, therefore, endeavoured to shew the regular consistency of all the schemes of providence, and the demonstrative probability of the truth of the Christian religion; we must now shew the unhappy tendency of pretensions, which would destroy all confidence, and render religion contrary to what God has evi-

dently designed it to be ; making it, instead of a system of practical piety and goodness, a visionary illusion. It is highly probable that these opinions originate from the same strong and restless passions of the mind which influence other men to deviate into the extreme of infidelity. These extremes of error spring from the same evil root. The same principle of ambition is observable in both. If the infidel is gratified by assuming the solemnity of doubt, of suspicion and scorn, and in thus defying the armies of the living God ; the pride of the enthusiast is equally flattered by the idea of his being the chosen favourite of Heaven.

The disputer presumes to exalt reason on the ruins of religion, and to give laws to Omniscience. The enthusiast, while he also dictates to man, aspires to familiar intercourse with the Sovereign of the universe. The one, in the vain consciousness of his own strength, contemns a Saviour : the other, in the same spirit of presumption, claims salvation as his right ; since he imagines it to have been his inheritance before the world began. In this parallel the claims of the infidel sink into comparative insignificance. He asserts preeminence only over the present world. But the

imaginary favourite of Heaven claims a present and an anticipated distinction, and considers himself to have been a chosen vessel before worlds were created, or salvation proclaimed. Fanaticism is the offspring of mental gloom ; but pride is the spark which kindles it into flame, and produces the pestilential dispersion of the noxious vapour. It is observable that the fanatic always describes his conversion as originating from dejection of spirit. He is oppressed by unaccountable horror, and overwhelmed with inexpressible fear. He sinks under the weight of real or imaginary apprehension, till on a sudden he perceives or fancies illumination and elevation of mind. His feelings are now of a contrary nature. Doubt is converted into arrogance, despair into certainty of salvation : and are not these evident extremes ? The first is natural. To feel distress of mind from a sense of misconduct is the effect of an awakened conscience ; but instantaneous exultation is not natural, but an extravagant transition from a state of the lowest dejection ; from the dread of reprobation to the certainty of forgiveness ; from the bondage of Satan to the inheritance of heaven. In all this it is remarkable, that this sense of guilt,

while it is considered a call to election, is rather an encouragement to presumption than productive of humility, which is the genuine fruit of the Spirit. May we not then truly attribute this instantaneous confidence to that potent principle of vanity which keeps the temper of man perpetually buoyant, and to that ambition which is ever aiming at superiority, whether it be spiritual or carnal? But against this spiritual pride the Scriptures themselves constantly inveigh, and by severe condemnation reveal to us plainly, that the Omniscient knows the force by which it prevails, and the empire which it obtains over the mind. But if spiritual pride be odious to God, it is also disgusting to men. However elated the fanatic may feel, however satisfied with himself in general, there is no character less amiable. Where is the gentle spirit, the engaging charity, which characterizes the true Christian, and which was so eminently apparent in the whole deportment of our blessed Master? The whole character of spiritual pride is diametrically opposite; for a man of this temper looks on all the world as beneath him. The elevation of mind which he possesses is decidedly not that spirit or wisdom which we are taught to expect from above, and which

the text so beautifully describes as *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*. With just severity therefore the Apostle adds, *the contrary spirit is earthly, sensual, devilish*. Now to discern the true temper of religion, the real fruits of the Holy Spirit, we have here an excellent criterion. It must first be pure. Of purity, God only can be the judge; we will therefore leave the fanatic to his own conscience, and to the scrutiny of Him, who is the searcher of hearts. Next it must be peaceable and gentle. Those who despise others have little of the disposition of peace or gentleness. It must be easy to be intreated. Is the converted fanatic generally easy to be intreated? It must be full of mercy. Is intolerance merciful? It must be full of good fruits. Here is the decisive test. What are the fruits? If good, we may believe him; if bad, then it is not uncharitable to draw the last conclusion, that it is not without hypocrisy. Here is the test, by which, if men can contrive to deceive themselves, assuredly they will not deceive others; and if in such points men be hypocrites, how deep and how flagitious is that hypocrisy! and fatal is their error, for they cannot deceive God.

But as there is a distinction to be made between a spirit of enthusiasm and fanaticism in religion, as well as in general conduct, it may be proper here to draw a parallel, that they may be the more easily distinguished.

Enthusiasm is often a laudable ardour, which elevates the soul, and serves to raise it to excellence. It is dignified, sentimental, generous, and disinterested. Fanaticism, on the contrary, is base, gloomy, deceitful, selfish, and inexorable. Enthusiasm is the friend of virtue, the stimulus of youth, and the strength of manhood. Without enthusiasm action will be languid, and feeling cold. Fanaticism is the incentive to error, and narrows every virtue; nay, even converts goodness into vice, religion into bigotry, and mercy into persecution. Enthusiasm dares much for the good of mankind, and sacrifices self-interest for the salvation of others. Fanaticism sharpens the dagger of the assassin, and exults in the thousands and tens of thousands it has slain. Enthusiasm may be tempered with gentleness, and softened by mercy. But fanaticism is incapable of kindness or compunction. Fanaticism, with unconverted Paul, believes that it does good to persecute. Fanaticism, the demon of heathen temples, dictated the severe persecution of the

first Christians : it presided over all the cruelties of bigoted Rome ; lit the fire of the blessed martyrs ; overturned kingdoms and altars, and arts and sciences ; and has deluged the earth with blood and rapine and devastation. Enthusiasm is indeed an extreme of passion ; but without some share of this there can be little excellence, either moral or intellectual : but fanaticism is the destruction of all that is good or great. We charge not modern fanaticism with all those direful effects, but such is its spirit ; and melancholy experience has shewn us, in this kingdom, to what enormities it has led, and to what it may again tend, should it too generally prevail. Our own age has also shewn its dreadful consequences in neighbouring nations, where it has raged under various characters. Indeed all history abounds with examples, which should teach us to shudder at excesses so dangerous to the happiness of society.

To spiritual pride then we may commonly refer those fanatical notions which are even now cherished, and which have done serious injury to the cause of religion. While the baser passions retain any influence over moral character, and these will perhaps ever be prevalent, there is little hope that such errors will

be eradicated. There is a spirit of ambition in the human mind, that is indeed, as the Apostle styles it, *earthly, sensual, and devilish*. This spirit is the destruction of all the temporal peace of mankind: but how lamentable is the reflection, that it is no less so of religious peace and unity; that it not only disturbs the tranquillity of private life, but of the sanctuary of God!

Nor has this temper alone characterized religious enthusiasts of old, the Pharisee or the Samaritan; but has tended to injure the true interests of Christianity. To this also we must attribute the avidity with which the doctrines of election and reprobation are embraced and cherished, in a sense very different from that of our Church. A spirit of extravagant and bigoted zeal is undoubtedly injurious to true religion; and, were it still to increase, would threaten the Church with serious danger. It appears then, that no task can be more appropriate, and more conformable to the intention of the pious Founder of these Lectures, and to the best interests of our establishment, than to controvert opponents who openly breathe defiance, and some, who, while they sit at the table of the Lord with us, eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup of communion, yet

uncharitably censure us. It must not, it cannot be concealed, that there are men, who, under the pretext of more than ordinary zeal for the doctrines of the established Church, are ever ready to strain her moderate and liberal opinions to the utmost stretch; to interpret them agreeably to their own extravagant sentiments. It must not be concealed, that there are even some who take shelter under these very articles from reprehension.

In the Gospels, the characters of such pretenders to more than ordinary zeal in religion has been portrayed by our blessed Lord himself; and no error seems to have excited more strong or more frequent reproof from Him, whom the Baptist truly designated by the appropriate figure of the Lamb of God: yet here even celestial patience could not refrain from expressing a just indignation. On such occasions he spoke with peculiar energy. Let us examine the picture, for the resemblance cannot be mistaken; this resemblance however affects not any particular sect or description of men. It applies to all, of whatever denomination of Christians, who profess more than they perform; who are zealous merely in opinion; and who, while they are strict in the observance, or ostentatious in the profession of

the externals of religion, make this display a pretext to deceive ; to substitute a part of religion for the whole. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, as well as in others, we read of the severe censures of our Lord on the Scribes and Pharisees : *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye devour widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayers ; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation*^a. To make long prayers seems to have been at all times the characteristic practice of zealots as well as deceivers. This practice however our Lord discountenances, and condemns the heathen on that account. They think to be heard, says he, for their much speaking ; a pretext not only for public deception, but a commutation. Long prayers are the substitute for practical charity ; much speaking for negligence of duty. It is a weak but very prevailing notion, that God will be pleased with incessant supplication. He indeed declares himself well pleased with the sincere offerings of gratitude and contrition ; but it is a more substantial service which he requires than that of the lips, the real tribute of the heart ; one sigh of true repentance, one act of mercy,

^a Matt. xxiii. 14.

that mercy which he loves better than sacrifice, is in his sight of far greater worth than years of unmeaning homage. With him the prayer of the wicked is turned into sin. Purity, humility, and singleness of heart, are the offerings in which he delights. Virtue is the best incense; and without this, faith is vain, and the pomp of devotion nothing more than ostentatious sin. It is however evident, that in the time of our blessed Saviour religion was made a pretext for the vilest purposes. The Pharisees prayed to acquire popularity, that they might have opportunities of fraud by abusing the confidence reposed in them; that they might devour widows houses. Surprising is the effect of this shallow artifice; and it has ever been, and still continues to be, too successful. It might be imagined, that, as a very great part of mankind is engaged in the arts of deception, suspicion would be too vigilant, and discernment too acute, to be deluded by so thin a veil. But while superstition prevails over the true sentiments of religion, it renders those the dupes of pretended sanctity, who could not be easily deceived in the common transactions of life. A guilty conscience makes intellectual cowards; and artful men employ spiritual fear to govern and to take advantage

of those whom they could never control by fair argument, or solid conviction. The credulity of ignorance is astonishing; and there seems to be an infatuation in religious bigotry. With this the children of this world are well acquainted, and find it a very infallible instrument of deceit. The strongest passions of the human mind are hope and fear; these hypocrisy connects with the interests of a future world. Governed by these, the feelings are easily and warmly excited, and made subservient to artifice and cunning. Detection in such cases seldom produces conviction; for those who voluntarily close their own eyes are equally unwilling to open them. In many instances perhaps the devotee is ashamed of confessing the folly of his credulity, and finds his own reputation closely and unhappily connected with the deceiver; for he who allows himself to have been deluded, admits the weakness of his own character. It is to be remarked too, that there is in such cases frequent and mutual compact of deception. The fanatic insists on no moral sacrifice in the disciple. He teaches him a substitute. Hence the widow may be defrauded with impunity. He who has learnt the arts of falsehood is not disappointed if he finds his instructor an hypo-

crite to other men. We are only angry at deception practised on ourselves ; and we are generally careless of the interest of others. The only mortification which such men can feel is for the detection of the occupation. The present world and its pleasures have the firmest hold on the heart and the passions. How to enjoy the one without the loss of the other is a question of the greatest interest. There is nothing which men will not believe, if they can be flattered with this hope. That the Christian religion has been established in the world in contradiction to sordid views, is a strong proof of its divine origin ; for no doctrine in the Gospel can be more clear than that we must surrender the world for the cross of Christ, and that the interests of the present and the future life are incompatible ; that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. But no doctrines are better calculated to gain profelytes than a scheme which proposes to evade the vengeance of the Almighty, to deceive the world, and to still the voice of conscience. Hence great was the success of the Church of Rome in the sale of indulgences, by the assumption of a dispensing power converting sin into virtue. And what does the Protestant fanatic less, who constantly decries virtue

and morality, and represents it even as odious in the sight of God?

The confession of sin, however, as a preliminary to pardon, implies a sense of its turpitude. But blind enthusiasm renounces the offering of good works, as a kind of affront to the Saviour. Transgressions are called by the specious name of trials; for names have great power in deception, and are the counterfeit signs of ideas. Hence remorse and repentance make no part of that creed which denies the efficacy of virtue.

Our blessed Lord goes on to say, *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves*^b.

If it be true that any preacher decries the great obligations, the indispensable conditions of morality, he promulgates doctrines which must make his proselytes, according to the language of our Saviour, children of hell. For he who loses a moral sense is indeed truly undone.

That he that doeth wickedness is unrighteous, is the plain and decided doctrine of re-

^b Matt. xxiii. 15.

ligion. It is an obvious truth ; and none who have ever been instructed in any idea of right or wrong, entertains any doubt on the subject. Whoever therefore by any artifice or evasion is confirmed or indulged in vicious habits ; whoever is taught that he need not cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, but may enjoy his darling vice, and be beloved by God, while he is the servant of sin, is indeed in danger of perdition.

But how melancholy is his condition, who has perhaps been content to walk humbly before his God on truly scriptural and rational opinions, and yet unhappily becomes deluded by such erroneous doctrines ! Many inoffensive characters of this description are often cruelly deceived and led astray from the sure and certain path : for with the fanatic all moral confidence is not only false, but even a proof of reprobation.

To place any trust in the practice of our duty to God and our neighbour is esteemed not only censurable, but even a sign of condemnation ; and the poor wretch, who is thus taught to distrust his good actions, loses his virtue in his new religion. He is misguided by that light which the Saviour of the world has taught us to call darkness. Such incidents

are not rare. It is the first article in the creed of the extravagant enthusiast. Nor is this all. The victim is not only persuaded that good and religious conduct will not render him worthy of acceptance with God ; but that, unless he feel within himself some extraordinary assurance of divine favour, some actual but indescribable experience, he is in a state of reprobation, and utterly lost, and must perish everlastingly. Alarmed by this representation, and probably modest and distrustful of himself by nature and habit, he mistakes the dream of fancy for reality, and sinks into dejection. His mind is totally lost. All that placid and soothing temper, which before had kept him in a state of enviable placidity, the consequences of religious practice and of good instruction, forsakes him. That indescribable and delightful consolation which arises from virtuous, innocent, religious, and laudable pursuits, is forever destroyed. The world can no more afford him delight. Even devout contemplation gives him no satisfaction. He becomes melancholy and dejected from being taught to look on all around him with apprehension ; he loses all that serenity and cheerfulness which are inseparable from rational religion, and at length sinks into morbid insanity, or incurable de-

spair. This is the fate of thousands, who are deceived by such dangerous doctrines; doctrines shocking to reason, and contrary to every intimation given to us in the Gospel, or the writings of the Apostles. Such are the effects of the terrific and uncomfortable representations of fanaticism operating on modest and ingenuous, but mistaken minds. And deeply have we to lament, that while the orthodox pastor of the Church is zealous in instilling its pure and rational doctrines, he is robbed by the extravagant zealot of inoffensive hearers, who become the unsuspecting victims of misrepresentation.

But on persons of a different description their effects are often diametrically opposite. They create the most odious passions, and produce the most disgusting effects. On the victim of religious frenzy we can look with compassion; but on the being, inflated with the self-sufficiency of spiritual pride, who impiously imagines himself the more immediate favourite of Heaven, and who affects to despise men better than himself; who does not look with indignation! No pride is so intolerable as spiritual; and vanity, which on other occasions is for the most part fitter for derision than for serious animadversion, is in such instances no less.

disgusting. Is it possible for a moment to conceive, that such a character can be acceptable in the sight of God? When we observe an harmless and unassuming Christian, thus betrayed or drawn aside from the true religion, which at once teaches the doctrines of salvation and encourages moral conduct, in which he has been educated; robbed of all consolation and peace, and driven into despair; are not the consequences fatal to society? It is a favourite doctrine of infidelity, that God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss; that he will allow for the frailty of men, and place crimes to the account of natural infirmity; that we may indulge ourselves in a favourite vice, provided we can satisfy the scruples of conscience by some plausible pretext. The fanatic, on the other hand, is taught, that where grace abounds there cannot be sin; and that his lapses therefore are venial; that to the elect no sin will be imputed. And what is the consequence? The fanatic reasons thus; I am blessed with a new and better light; I feel grace abound in me. I may fall; but sin will not be imputed to me. Good works are ostentatious; and therefore, whatever I do, my salvation is sure; for I am bought with a

price, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against me. Will the enthusiast then deny himself enjoyment, to which he can flatter himself that he is licensed? Who will love virtue, if he believes that it is not essential to propitiate the favour of Heaven? Who will forsake sin, if he can persuade himself that it is not displeasing to his Maker? I would not be so illiberal as to charge any description of enthusiasts with a systematic plan to encourage vice. I believe that they neither profess such a design, nor openly encourage it. It is impossible to suppose that the more flagrant vices are not condemned by preachers of this description.

But is it not highly dangerous to morals to inveigh against practical virtue; perpetually to stigmatize good works with opprobrious epithets? In opposition to these pernicious sentiments, unhappily too prevalent, let us contrast the truly apostolical doctrines of our Church, which teaches us, in an express article, not to trust in our works, as if they could of themselves put away sin and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet that they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and necessarily spring out of a true and lively faith, inso-

much that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit. From hence the question may be fairly decided, who are the true preachers of the word of God.

LECTURE VII.

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

THE pretensions of modern enthusiasts are founded on the doctrines of predestination and election, and they appeal to the seventeenth article of our Church as decidedly in their favour, and condemn those of the clergy whose opinions on this article partake less of the rigid spirit of Calvin. It will be our business at present to inquire, whether these opinions are not exaggerated by enthusiasts beyond the spirit, with which the article was framed, will warrant. The article asserts, that “predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath

“ chosen through Christ out of mankind, and
“ to bring them by Christ to everlasting salva-
“ tion, as vessels made to honour.” Now first,
in this representation it is observable, that no
allusion is made to any determinate number of
persons. It speaks generally of those who are
chosen ; of whom the number may be unli-
mited. Choice does indeed imply preference,
and preference selection. But then this choice
is not represented as arbitrary or capricious ;
“ they are chosen through Christ.” Now as
the promises are made through Christ to all
who believe, here is the most perfect freedom
of will.

All who choose to accept salvation through
Christ are made capable of doing so. They
have religious liberty ; and as Christ has pro-
mised to accept all who come to him, the co-
venant between God the Father and Jesus is,
that all will be accepted who apply to the Me-
diator ; consequently all may be saved, if all
be willing to apply. It is further observable,
that there is no mention of reprobation. Here
is neither particular unconditional choice, nor
is there absolute rejection ; for as no precise
number is said to be chosen, nor indeed any
precise number implied, it is evident that that
which is indefinite may be infinite. Even the

very notion of choice does not imply more than preference upon certain conditions. It includes not the idea of rejection, unless where the number to be chosen is defined by some absolute decree, by which the Deity has bound himself; nor would such an idea be consonant to our reasonable conjecture of his attributes. It seems therefore evident, that if all mankind are willing to accept the conditions; that is, if all are willing to apply to Christ, all may be saved; all may, all will be chosen. In this representation there is nothing inconsistent or unreasonable. The scheme of Christianity proceeds on this clear principle, that salvation can only be through Christ to all who are called; that is, all who hear, receive, and obey the Gospel; and that if any who hear will not receive, they must of course be rejected. It proceeds further on the supposition that all mankind are subject to the consequences of the transgression of the first man, and in bondage to original sin. It is not now my purpose to discuss the consideration with the philosopher, or to dispute it with the enthusiast. Suppose this to be the fact, and the determination or decree of God to liberate mankind from bondage is merciful and consistent with divine goodness, and the conditions may certainly be left to infinite power.

The article does not at all speak of any who shall be absolutely rejected, or who shall be placed out of the reach of divine mercy, but proceeds conformably to describe the natural consequences of this free determination. All who believe and obey the word are "as vessels made to honour;" in allusion to the apostolic simile of the potter. And it is to be remarked, that this simile is used in the Epistle to the Romans, as an argument of mercy, in answer to the bigoted opinions of the Judaizing Christians, who objected to the reception of the Gentile converts; it relates therefore not to a first, but a second creation through Christ. "Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season." We know that all are called, though not all accepted; according to his purpose or design, his plan of redemption: but those who accept the terms "through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely." Observe, they are justified unconditionally through obedience to the call. They are not impelled by any necessity. "They be made sons of God by adoption;" that is, by the choice, which is the effect of obeying the call. "They be made like the image of his only

" begotten son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works; and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity." Observe further, that walking religiously in good works is the test, the mark and proof of the acceptance. All this is extremely natural and consistent with every representation of Scripture. This is clearly an elucidation of the mercy of God; but gives not any idea of reprobation, unless of those who hear and will not believe. The article goes on; " As the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things; as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God; so, for curious and carnal persons lacking the spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into

“ wretchedness of most unclean living, no less
“ perilous than desperation.” Let us remark
on all this. What is full of unspeakable com-
fort? “ The godly consideration of predestina-
“ tion, and our election in Christ.” What can
be more consolatory than the religious assu-
rance of the decree of God, that is, the con-
dition of salvation; and the hope of our elec-
tion on this decree, this fixed promise of the
God of truth? Who are the persons who are to
experience this unspeakable comfort? “ Godly
“ persons, and such as feel in themselves the
“ working of the spirit of Christ.” What are
those workings? Not a visionary elation of
mind; not spiritual fervour of imagination;
but “ the working of the spirit of Christ, mor-
“ tifying the works of the flesh and their
“ earthly members, and drawing up their
“ minds to high and heavenly things, as well
“ because it doth greatly establish and confirm
“ their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed
“ through Christ, as because it doth fervently
“ kindle their love towards God.” Here no
false trust is recommended: nothing for the
imagination: but all certain proof; mortifica-
tion, denial, a mind purified and exalted; that
is, the test of obedience. The article goes on
to describe the blessed effects of hope in the

promises of God, in those who feel in themselves the spirit of Christ; that is, the same mind which was in Christ Jesus; not any particular or extraordinary effusions of the Holy Ghost.

It further proceeds to describe the unhappy condition of carnal and curious persons, lacking this spirit, and having continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination. These carnal and curious persons are those who are firmly attached to worldly pleasures and pursuits, and who reject the offers of God through an obstinate and vicious temper. What is the dangerous downfall to which the sense of God's predestination exposes them? A sense of despair arising from the consciousness of their own misconduct. It is here to be remarked, that the article makes no mention of particular reprobation, by which they are condemned to the severity of the wrath of the Almighty, and irretrievably lost; but they become desperate from a knowledge that eternal life is to be the inheritance of the righteous, by the general decree of God. They are conscious that they merit nothing; that they are subject to his just displeasure; and that their condemnation must arise from themselves; from their own perverse disobedience, and re-

luctance to embrace the promises, or to deserve them by compliance with the conditions. This is the natural consequence of vice; for what reasonable being would not despair, if he were conscious of a reprobate mind, and an abandoned conduct? They are thus thrust by the devil either into desperation, that is, by obstinate attachment to their lusts, or into wretchedness of unclean living. The usual consequences of blind perseverance in infidelity is a vicious life and debauched practice. It is to be observed, that the article gives not the least intimation of any absolute decree of God, by which they are unalterably condemned to this state of desperation. It merely describes the common effects of wickedness and impiety; and indeed these are inseparable in the nature of things. Here is not the least mention of any Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation, and the article concludes with a clause, which may tend to remove all doubts on the subject. It arrogates nothing; but leaves the doctrine to our consideration on the best grounds. It refers solely to the only true guide, the holy Scriptures; and, asserting nothing dictatorial on this abstruse subject, leaves it to free inquiry, directs us to the true source of information, and gives every one an opportunity of determining for

himself on the question. " Furthermore, we
" must receive God's promises in such wise as
" they be generally set forth to us in holy
" Scripture."

The opinions which divided the Christian world on the decrees of God have ever been very various, and maintained with considerable vehemence. The question is in itself abstruse and difficult; and nothing seems to be more contrary to the intention of our blessed Lord in all his instructions, than that men should enter on subtle disquisitions on the divine counsels. His doctrines are delivered as matters of authority not to be questioned; and nothing can appear more absurd, than that men should admit the authority, and then engage in controversies on subjects acknowledged to be above them. Yet the world has ever been perplexed with religious disputes, founded not so much on the declarations of Scripture, as on metaphysical subtlety. This subject of the divine decrees has been a perpetual source of perplexity, and has left the inquirer and the disputant exactly as they were. Victory has been claimed by every side; but truth has been established by neither. It is therefore with the greatest propriety that those, who framed this seventeenth article of the Church,

concluded it with a clause of reference to the best and only source of information, the Scriptures. The several opinions, which were the subject of dispute at that period, are evidently avoided; but the article is expressed in so comprehensive a manner, that it judiciously endeavours to reconcile, as far as possible, the different parties who were then engaged in polemic disputes. And though the Calvinists, availing themselves of this moderation, distort the true and obvious meaning, nothing can there be found to support their uncharitable dogmas. The doctrine of Calvin on this subject was intolerant; he maintained, "that God "predestinated, from all eternity, one part of "mankind to everlasting happiness, and another to endless misery; and that he was "led to make this distinction by no other motive than that of his own good pleasure and "free-will." Now though the predestination to life is expressed in the article, there is not the least mention of a predestination to endless misery. Do we here observe any reference to the subjects of dispute then prevalent? Do we hear of the sentiments of the Supralapsarians, who maintained that God framed his decrees

* Mosheim, vol. iv.

antecedent to the creation; that he consulted only his own glory; that he considered the good or misery of man only as it conduced to that limited end, if we may be allowed the expression; and therefore that his glory might depend on the eternal misery of man? Do we hear of the opinions of the Sublapsarians, who admitted that God has eternally decreed the salvation of some part of mankind, and who thus far entertained a more charitable doctrine; but that he was regardless of those who were not immediately included in the favoured number? Or do we observe any reference to the doctrines of the Arminians, who admitted the merciful intentions of the Deity, but, supposing that his prescience foresaw all possibilities and contingencies, and foreseeing also how men would act, decreed their salvation or condemnation on that foreknowledge? Nor does the article; on the other hand, affirm with the Socinian, that man has no need of inward grace, and no inward assistance. From whence it is evident, that the orthodox of our Church neither agree with the uncharitable doctrines of Calvin, nor the peculiar tenets of Arminius or Socinus, but that they refer all to the genuine sense of Scripture, without attempting to limit the omniscience or the omnipotence of God.

Yet as the world was at that period distracted by these opposite sentiments, we may remark as much caution in the framing of this article, as the violence of the times would admit. Difficult indeed it is to steer a safe and direct course in the storms and rocky intricacies of controversy. It is however, I think, evident, that no zealot can from this article lay claim to such authority, as to exclude men of more moderate sentiments from subscribing to its contents.

The spirit of modern fanaticism consists in giving the highest colouring to all the sentiments of the Church. For besides this doctrine of predestination, other opinions of the Establishment are exaggerated. Of these the principal are, the doctrines of original sin, of the justification of man, and of good works. Now if we consider these rationally, we shall find that the doctrines preached by the Clergy of the established Church are perfectly conformable to their subscription, to Scripture, to sound criticism, and to common sense. All that is beyond is the mere effect of enthusiasm and extravagance. It is therefore of importance to apologize for our brethren, and to endeavour to exonerate them from the serious charge of subscribing to certain opinions,

and yet maintaining doctrines diametrically opposite.

The doctrine of original sin has given great offence. Yet in all ages the origin of evil has been the subject of inquiry. That moral evil exists, has been too long proved by fatal experience to be denied; but abstruse inquiries are indefinite. The oriental philosophy has attempted to account for this by supposing two principles in the universe; a good and bad dæmon, who being, according to some, of equal powers, or to others, of unequal, have either divided the empire of the universe, or have contended for sovereignty with each other. This doctrine was entertained by the Jewish sects under different forms; and this infected Christianity in the infancy of its establishment. Nor were disquisitions on this intricate subject confined to believers; for infidels have ever been equally desirous of accounting for a fact which they cannot deny. But even since Philosophy has been cleared of all the entanglements and absurdities of darker ages, she has afforded us no satisfactory account. What then has been the result of all the pomp and parade of metaphysicians? Moses they deride; they would shake our faith in God; and yet the philosopher can-

not give us any satisfactory answer. But as we had rather *walk in the law of the Lord* than *fit in the seat of the scorner*, we are ready to believe, that sin and death have entered into the world by the transgressions of man, and we think it very consistent with our ideas of the goodness of God, to endeavour to rescue us from such a state of misery. We are not too proud to admit that this might be done in any manner which the divine wisdom might be pleased to adopt. We are willing to acknowledge; that since God has *concluded all in unbelief*, it was with the gracious purpose *that he might have mercy upon all*^d.

How the transgression of the first man should affect all posterity is indeed incomprehensible. Yet that all the human race is imperfect, weak, and fallible, both the believer and the infidel must acknowledge, since they both equally feel it. But the difference is, that the infidel will not accept the remedy, because he does not comprehend the mode of cure. We know that physical evil exists. Disease ravages the human constitution, and for bodily disease there are natural remedies, which we adopt, because we have positive demonstration of their

^d Romans xi. 32.

effects. Now in the spiritual sense, have we not high demonstration? We feel the disorder, and all its baneful consequences. We know that he who offers the cure has power to produce it. We know too, that the cause must be perfectly understood by him, and we think it not superstition to trust him, whose omniscience foresees and searches all causes, and whose omnipotence is adequate to all effects. We had rather trust the declaration of an infallible God, than the assertions of fallible man, who can understand but little, and prove still less. We believe therefore that original sin "is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil." The sin of Adam may have affected the moral nature in the same way as bodily distemper is communicable to successive generations. Here is analogy; "so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit:" and who will be so confident as to deny this position? Who will dare to affirm, that his natural affections are not often at variance with the will of Heaven? Who shall dare to affirm, that his virtues are

unmixed with weakness and error? Who will have the presumption to claim the praise of perfect moral excellence?

The article thus proceeds: "And therefore
" in every person born into the world, it de-
" serveth God's wrath and damnation." What?
Sin undoubtedly; that being morally and es-
sentially hateful to God. There is nothing in
all this which is not maintained and supported
in the preaching of every rational member of
the Church. But in the following clause of
the article, we meet with an assertion, which
must confound the pretensions of enthusiasts;
that "the infection of nature doth remain,
" yea, in those which are regenerated." Fa-
naticism entertains very different ideas of re-
generation. Spiritual pride elates itself above
all inferior beings. It cannot fall from grace.

We next come to an article, which is the
subject of much dispute and misapprehension:
The justification of man. "We are accounted
" righteous before God, only for the merit of
" our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith,
" and not for our own works or deservings."
This is so undeniable, that we may add in the
subsequent words, "Wherefore, that we are
" justified by faith only, is a most wholesome

“ doctrine, and very full of comfort.” That justification can only depend on the good pleasure and the will of God, is so conformable to every idea of omnipotence, that no one can object to the doctrine. Whoever shall consider the imperfection of our nature; how much of weakness is mixed with all our endeavours; that the highest degree or act of virtue has an alloy, will not presume on any act or any power of his own. It may be said, Who could abide, if God be extreme to mark even our best actions? The most pure of human beings can perhaps scarcely stand the scrutiny of the Searcher of hearts. But even admit that our virtue were perfect, yet God may please whether he will accept it, or not. Salvation and justification are the free gift and bounty of the Creator, just as strength, or health, or any temporal enjoyment. It is a free gift or grace of God. He who makes conditions may propose also the mode of acceptance: for he who has the power of granting terms, has some sovereignty, some natural or acquired authority; and though our subsequent conduct may entitle us to the privilege annexed to the performance of the condition, yet the nature of those conditions being absolutely in the power

of the maker or the imposer, if they be easy, it is his bounty who frames them so. Now here we have Omnipotence in opposition to creature: absolute power opposed to absolute weakness. Every thing on the part of the creature is given; nothing can be claimed. We have no right to the goodness or the mercy of God. We are his offspring. We are under the necessity of complying with his will; and where conditions are proposed by absolute power, even those are a bounty. In earthly transactions there may be some claim between contracting parties. But between God and man it is not so; between the Creator and his creature all is benevolence on the one part, and all obligation on the other.

It is further evident, that faith is the mean by which our salvation through Christ is to be obtained. He who accepts the promises of God must believe on him, and on his belief is founded the acceptance of the covenant made between him and the Almighty. Now we can only come to God through Christ; he is *the way and the life*, and besides him there is no other. We must therefore be justified through faith in Christ; we can be justified by no other mode. Works are the proof of our perform-

ance, but they are not the terms ; for God does not save us because we can offer him any thing of right, but because we trust in him through Christ, who ratified the covenant. For the new covenant is not the acceptance of man, because his works have any natural claim, but because God through Christ has been pleased to promise acceptance. Christ is the ratifier of the covenant, and faith the bond or instrument of our adherence to the Saviour. Further, without faith we cannot have communion with Christ, and therefore by the instrumentality of that faith are we saved. Works, it is evident, cannot save us without faith ; and as they are produced only by the co-operation of God, and not alone by our own powers, they are the consequences of grace, but not the sole conditions of salvation. For God does not save because man is a worker of righteousness, but because righteousness is worked through faith in Christ, who ratifies the covenant, who accepts and confirms it for us. In all such questions it must be confessed that there is much intricacy, and therefore they are to be understood only in conformity to Scripture and reason : but from this statement, which is, I trust, the general belief of the

established Clergy, it is evident that we cannot be charged with neglecting to preach, or with misrepresenting, the true doctrines of the Gospel.

LECTURE VIII.

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

HAVING considered the errors which the mistaken zeal of many has produced on the subject of predestination, of original sin, and the justification of man, I shall now beg leave to offer a few brief observations on the article *Of good Works*, which is also liable to similar misinterpretations.

That the great object of all religion is to render us more acceptable to God, and to improve our moral and religious nature, cannot, it should seem, become the subject of controversy. But we are told in the language of enthusiasts, that faith is in itself sufficient; and although they do not openly discourage the practice of virtue, yet, by insisting so strongly on an affection of the mind, which they can-

not explain, they ultimately corrupt the sentiments, by giving the false notion, that goodness is no recommendation to almighty mercy, and consequently of little avail.

•Now there are no terms more misrepresented than those of faith and grace. In the true sense of the Scriptures no rational Christian would ever presume to dispute the efficacy of the one, or the divine influence of the other. Grace is the general or particular favour of God, conferred on us through the promises of Jesus Christ. It is either absolute or conditional. Absolute grace is that by which we enjoy life and all its blessings, health, strength, and every other gift of God, which is bestowed on us without any annexed conditions, and the use of which is in a great measure dependant on ourselves: for the preservation or destruction of life or health must depend on the conduct of man, and either may be withdrawn whenever it shall please the Almighty. But grace, by which is implied the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is entirely conditional, and requires our acceptance and co-operation: for a reprobate mind may reject, or a careless one may abuse it. Thus the Scripture tells us, *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of*

works, lest any man should boast^f. Thus all is of grace. But what is the gift of God? The grace or favour of God; and if therefore we are saved not of ourselves, if works will not save us, neither will faith. For faith is that assent which reason gives to the word of God, and which may be either implicit and instantaneous, or the consequence of deliberation; for deliberation implies inquiry; and though there may be merit in a ready acquiescence, there is probably more stability in that which is the result of calm investigation. Faith in the Gospel depends on evidence, and is founded on an examination of those evidences which God has been mercifully pleased to vouchsafe to us. Without inquiry, it is mere assent, not resulting from any principles, and which therefore can obtain only the name of acquiescence. But that faith which is built on evidence, and a devout trust and confidence in the promises of God, has all the merit which can be expected from man.

But more particularly the faith which is mentioned in the New Testament is well explained by an eminent writer on our Articles, to stand “for the complex of Christianity, in

^f Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

" opposition to the law, which stands as gene-
 " rally for the complex of the whole Mosaical
 " dispensation. So that the faith of Christ is
 " equivalent to this, the Gospel of Christ;
 " because Christianity is a federal religion,
 " founded, on God's part, on the promises that
 " he has made to us, and on the rules he has
 " set us; and on our part, on our believing
 " that revelation, our trusting to those pro-
 " mises, and our setting ourselves to follow
 " those rules. The believing this revelation,
 " and the great article of it, of Christ's being
 " the Son of God, and the true Messiah, that
 " came to reveal his Father's will, and to offer
 " himself up to be the sacrifice of this new co-
 " venant, is often represented as the great and
 " only condition of the covenant on our part:
 " but still this faith must receive the whole
 " Gospel, the precepts as well as the promises
 " of it, and receive Christ as a Prophet to
 " teach and a King to rule, as well as a Priest
 " to save us &c."

Thus our article tells us, that " good works
 " are the fruits of faith, and follow after justi-
 " fication." Now from the natural imperfec-
 " tion of our best endeavours, " good works," as

§ Burnet's Exposition of the Articles.

the article proceeds to assert, "cannot put away
"our sins," that is, by themselves, by their
own right, but only by an assumed or acquired
value, "and endure the severity of God's judg-
"ment;" that is, his scrutiny; "yet are they
"pleasing to God in Christ, and do spring out
"necessarily of a true and lively faith; inso-
"much that by them a lively faith may as evi-
"dently be known, as a tree discerned by the
"fruit." This similitude is very natural and
exact. But enthusiasts pretend, that as works
are said to be the fruits of faith, therefore they
must follow of course. Now the articles of
our Church never assert this, nor do the Scrip-
tures. They are always understood conjointly.
Faith, in the sense of the article, and of Scrip-
ture, supposes goodness or virtue. But as faith
may be weakened, and we may fall off from
grace, it is evident that there cannot be an in-
separable consequence. For if the tree die,
where will be the fruit? The tree may be
planted, but it must be cultivated, watered, and
pruned; and, after all, if the root fail, there will
be no produce. Fanatics distort truth by ex-
aggeration. Their tenets are founded on some
undeniable position; but are no longer intelli-
gible in vague language. They give the co-
lour of falsehood to the plainest fact. That

which is straight becomes crooked, seen through a denser medium, and, like diverging rays, reflects no perfect image. Even those assertions, which are not disputable in their origin, become in the current language of mysticism clouded and unintelligible; and there is an awe in mysticism, which inspires veneration in vulgar minds.

From this short sketch I have endeavoured to shew that persons of a warm temper or bigoted principles give an extravagant interpretation to some of the doctrines of our Church; an interpretation which certainly is not agreeable to the original meaning of those who compiled the articles of our faith, and which cannot be supported, either by the holy Scriptures, by sound criticism, or the fair and unbiassed deductions of reason. I shall now proceed to offer a few remarks on the method of instruction adopted by enthusiasts.

It is the nature of all enthusiasm to employ a language of its own, which consists of words without precise ideas, which are current, but are the denominations, not of a real, but of a fictitious value. The peculiar and appropriate language of the Scriptures, applicable only to past times and past occasions, is employed for immediate occurrences; and unhappily the

phrases and allusions of the apostolic writers are misapplied, and degradingly familiarized by this species of affectation. Men of narrow minds are caught by singularity, and not seldom even wickedness may be covered with the delusive gloss of words. Thus errors are dignified by the name of Trials, and every extraordinary elation of mind is called Experience. This deceit is very dangerous ; for if the commission of error be only a trial, it may follow, that the most sinful may be the most approved servant : and if sudden elations or depressions of the spirits be proof of acceptance and approbation with God, all religion must consist in feeling, and not in fact. How contrary is this to the Scriptures, which declare to us the most unequivocal marks of justification : *He that doeth righteousness is righteous.*

But let us not rashly accuse those of hypocrisy who may only be deceived ; for since religious difference is productive of the most bitter animosity, nothing is more common, than for opposite persuasions to charge each other with that crime. The signs of religious hypocrisy are clearly and easily to be detected. Men may be deluded to a most extraordinary degree, and therefore all the external marks of hypocrisy are sometimes erroneous. A man

may deceive himself by mistaking one motive for another, and may therefore fondly conceive that he is under a peculiar influence, when in reality he is actuated by a spirit diametrically opposite. It is very difficult to guard against self-flattery; and the combinations of passions, interests, and motives, which constitute character, are indeed very various and contradictory. But there is one infallible proof, by which others may judge, and which is very satisfactory. It is when professions and practice are decidedly at variance, and when those professions serve to promote some secret and temporal advantage. That partiality which prevents a man from perceiving the true motives of his own actions, cannot escape the observation of others, who can always judge of effects: for the delusions we practise or encourage in ourselves are clear to other men. Let me not be misunderstood as reflecting on those who dissent from the established Church. No doubt multitudes act on the best motives. Few can be accounted judges of theological questions; the great mass of mankind may therefore be excused from acting on common motives without deep research. Many are educated in principles opposite to those we profess, and every allowance must be made for

the influence of education, and the difficulty of making distinctions ; but at the same time we must discourage presumption on subjects which ought always to be examined with the deepest humility, and with calm deliberation. It is the great doctrine of the Gospel, that we should always live in a state of fear ; that is, not of distrust of the power, the truth, or the love of God, but a distrust of ourselves, lest we become unworthy, and therefore lose his favour : but there can be no distrust where there is positive assurance, and where there is positive assurance there cannot be humility. Now there is no character more strongly or frequently insisted on than religious humility. God is said to despise and to abhor the proud. In the language of fanaticism there is a parade of self-debasement of the creature, and similar expressions, little intelligible to the logician ; but where is the mild spirit, where is the humble deportment, the meek and downcast eye, the contrition of repentance, the trembling of awe, the expression of holy fear ? On the contrary, do we not see undaunted confidence, open scorn, proud and high looks, and every thing but modesty and forbearance ? Do we not hear bold and arrogant, familiar and indecorous addresses to Heaven ; every external sign of con-

duct which a creature should not express, and which the idea of the majesty of Heaven should restrain? There is a vanity in religious professions. The individual aims at distinction. The Jews were for excluding all but themselves from the promises. The Calvinists adopt the same selfish ambition; and could the secret thoughts of individuals be scrutinized and detected, it would often appear, that religious ambition centres in self-love. Thus Providence is circumscribed by the fanatic, who looks only at a part, and cannot grasp the universal and magnificent plan.

It would be harsh to say, that enthusiastic principles are hypocritical; but it must be confessed, that they are calculated to encourage hypocrisy. They assimilate to deceitful dispositions; and if they do not find a man a deceiver, not seldom make him so. They promote a superficial righteousness. They substitute a nominal for a real religion. They produce an imperfect instead of a radical cure of the soul. They do not probe the depths of the wound. But sin must be renounced altogether, or faith will be unavailing; and grace cannot act on the soul which is not purified. It is easy to talk of the justification of the spirit, and it is pleasing to conceive that

we feel it. But our divine Master has left us decisive modes of trial. *Not he who saith, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* And the Apostle St. James says, *Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.* It is a delusion of the most gross kind to teach sinners to believe that they are safe, because they have quieted their own fears, and have no positive proof of renovation of spiritual health. Yet this is a common practice, and very imposing; for in the sickness of the soul it is natural for sinners to wish to avoid a disagreeable or a painful remedy. They are apt to say, *Speak the word only, and we shall be healed.* The same fondness which renders the patient desirous of health will induce him to flatter himself that he is better, while the existence and the effects of the distemper are evident to all who behold him. Such is the condition of those who imagine that they are in a state of grace, while they are yet in their sins. They are deceived and elated with imaginary health, while to others they clearly exhibit the miserable traces of the unsubdued and secret distemper. Whatever has a tendency to spread false conceptions of religion must be injurious to society; and to teach men to substitute ap-

pearance for reality, to give other notions of practical virtue than those which tend to essential and real reformation, cannot but be considered as extremely dangerous. In fact, by this colour of sanctity vice becomes less hideous; the strongest bonds of society may be loosened, and the most serious consequences must unavoidably follow. Such extravagance should not be dignified with the name of religion. It is a specious superstition, and against the prevalence of this the labours of the Clergy ought to be directed.

Our blessed Lord has given us a criterion, by which to distinguish the religious hypocrite from the sincere believer. *Beware, says he, of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing; but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.*^c It is therefore both safe and fair to judge of men by their actions; for these are the fruits to which the Saviour of the world refers, and which he proposes to us as the rule by which to try the professions of religion. And he makes a most applicable allusion to the truth of nature in her productions. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree*

^c Matt. vii. 15, 16.

bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit ^b. And this decisive experiment may be applied to morals; for a good tree, that is, he who acts on sincere principles, cannot produce evil fruit. Virtuous conduct will be the natural effect of virtuous principles; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Minds totally depraved become incapable of good, even in the attempt to act with propriety; the good will always retain a large proportion of evil. *Wherefore by their fruits shall ye know them.*

But another evil attends extravagant zeal. The supreme Being, who should be approached with humility, and with a deep and sincere conviction of our unworthiness; that supreme Being is addressed by enthusiasts in a manner which denotes confidence rather than contrition, unholy presumption rather than devout awe. Thus, instead of impressing the minds of their hearers with the vast difference which exists between the Creator and the creature, they produce a dangerous security, and destroy that reverence and fear, which in the sacred language of the Scriptures is said to be *the beginning of wisdom.*

^b Matt. vii. 16, 17.

I have hitherto dwelt on some of the errors which arise from intemperate zeal, as a caution to the younger part of my hearers. The fervour of youth will often lead good minds into excess; and unhappily the warmth of imagination, or mistaken ardour, sometimes oversteps the bounds of discretion. With the best intentions some are thus deluded, and fall insensibly into enthusiastic practices before they are fully aware of the consequences. I shall therefore add a few observations on the subject. And here I must discourage the practice of extemporaneous preaching, which it appears to me can answer no useful purpose, but must conduce to the degradation, rather than the improvement of the mind.

If we consider the nature of Christian society, we shall find the practice not at all congenial to its present state. We are not like the missionary, whose employment it is to instruct those who are not previously possessed of the principles of knowledge; for him the practice may be necessary, since he is to make an instantaneous impression. But we have to communicate instruction to those who have been born and baptized in the faith, and have received perhaps some previous instruction; or at all events, who have their minds prepared

to receive such instruction. Our object should be, not merely to awaken the passions which are evanescent, but to fix and confirm the principles of our religion, and to produce a lasting conviction. It is certainly more decent to come prepared with those discourses to our hearers, which are to teach them the way of everlasting life. The practice of extemporaneous speaking is applicable to certain purposes in life, but certainly not to that of solid instruction; and better calculated for the interests of the present world, than for the great and sublime object of making us *wise unto salvation*. But the practice of this unprepared mode of instruction can never with safety be attempted by the younger part of the clergy, since it will tend only to dissipate their own ideas, as well as those of their hearers, and seems little becoming the gravity of our doctrines. These observations have been made because much is frequently said on the subject, and the habit is made a means of dazzling the imagination of those who do not think deeply. How painful is the reflection, that all which the eminent divines of the Establishment have written in defence of the truth, and for the improvement of mankind, should be neglected; and that unconnected rhapsodies should be substituted as

the means of awakening fervour, instead of communicating durable instruction. The mind cannot be confirmed in goodness by occasional flights of passion, but by fixed and indelible principles. The labours of men of the first ability have been exhausted in the cause of truth. The works of the several divines of the Church are beyond praise. They are numerous and admirable. To collect the essence of these incomparable works, the diligence of the present day should be directed; and from these sources of religious knowledge mankind should be thus supplied with the means of substantial information on faith and practice. It is therefore truly lamentable to consider, that the public mind should be misled by the propagation of confused notions and inconclusive representations of Christianity. To prevent, as far as possible, prepossessions of such a dangerous nature must be our duty. Violence indeed of any kind would be as injudicious as it is contrary to our professions; but to discountenance such mistakes must be in every sense becoming and safe.

Zeal however in the discharge of our duty is most essential; but it must be discreet. Yet our discretion is sometimes misrepresented as coldness. But, while we are calumniated, let

us not in return offer any remarks that are personal, or that may seem directed to any particular sect or persuasion. We are ready to defend our own faith, without giving offence. We are willing that the ministry should not be blamed. We are willing to admit every man to the full enjoyment of his own sentiments. Our arguments are directed not against the conviction of any modest dissenter from our faith ; but it is the presumptuous and the illiterate we wish to discountenance. For while we are the friends of that toleration, which the liberal system of our laws permit, yet those at least who instruct ought to prove their qualifications. The welfare of society is concerned in preventing the illiterate from becoming teachers. For since no ideas are innate to the mind, all knowledge is a transplantation of something foreign, and, like an exotic plant, must duly be cherished, or it will wither : but errors, like indigenous weeds, grow in the uncultivated soil, and abound more where culture is neglected.

To conclude ; I must again beg leave to observe, that my object is to warn the unsuspecting against the presumptuous. I would not mortify those whose zeal, though extravagant,

may yet be sincere, and who are led into error, rather by a warmth of imagination, than a wish to deceive. That mildness which characterized our blessed Lord himself, which marked the first teachers of the Gospel, and which, under the divine goodness, was perhaps one of the secondary causes which contributed towards the preservation of the Church, during those ages of persecution which opposed its establishment; that mildness we must endeavour to imitate in our addresses to those who differ from us only from motives of conscience. But we must at the same time deeply lament, that while reason, the best gift of God, is abused by the infidel; while he endeavours to shake our faith in all that can give consolation to this life, in all that can promise happiness hereafter; while with daring presumption he would alienate our minds from any dependence on him who is the rock of our salvation; we see another description of men, who deny the utility of learning in sacred interpretations. These, rejecting the necessity of exerting that reasoning faculty, which is our highest distinction, imagine themselves favoured by divine communication, and are induced, from such mistaken notions, to neglect insisting on those

duties, which are so strongly inculcated by the holy Scriptures, and which are so indispensably necessary for the preservation of Christian society.

We do not pretend to say that our Establishment, like all human institutions, may not be liable to some blemishes ; but this we may assert, that it has been maintained and defended by a succession of men of the highest human endowments, and the most solid learning. Indeed we may boast, that the Church of Christ, from its earliest establishment, has been sustained by the greatest ability, under the influence of divine providence and grace. After the first Apostles, when inspiration and the power of working miracles gradually ceased, the Church was supported by the learning and talents of the primitive fathers. But when literature was obscured by the gloom of the darker ages, and reason was lost in the subtlety of scholastic dispute, religion was equally involved in a temporary gloom ; and all the errors of the Church of Rome demonstrate to us plainly the sad effects of ignorance and barbarism. But from the glorious æra of the Reformation, when a new dawn of mental light succeeded, even to the present day, the cause

of Christianity has been most ably supported ; and we have the strongest assurance that truth shall ultimately prevail, and universal righteousness be established.

N O T E S
AND
OBSERVATIONS.

NOTES

AND

OBSERVATIONS.

LECTURE II.

P. 39. l. i. *Modern sceptics have attempted, &c.*] We hear much of spontaneous production. But what is this principle? Regular process. Is it not obvious, that the seeds of vegetables retain their principles of vitality and growth for a prodigious length of time? Seeds of some plants, that have remained long buried in the bosom of the earth, will, on the turning of the soil, immediately grow. While they remain too deep in the ground, they cannot receive the benefit of the sun, and consequently do not advance. But they become productive on their exposure to the action of the sun and the air. Here is a remarkable analogy. The eggs of animals and the seeds of vegetables, and especially of the more minute kinds, (for in fact seed and eggs are both the cradles of embryos,) retain the principles of life for a considerable length of time. This power is dormant under unfavourable circumstances, but restored to activity in others more congenial. When the seeds of minute plants are brought to the light, they feel a vivifying power, and become plants; and when the eggs of animalculæ meet a proper nidus, they burst into life, and become animals. The only difference that

may exist, is, that the eggs of animalculæ have a longer retention of the vital principle. But here is no spontaneous generation; all is vitality, not from a spontaneous principle, but a law of nature.

P. 40. l. 6. *But it is absurd to admit, &c.*] A naturalist, who had studied this subject, thought it not impossible that the first insects were the anthers and stigmas of flowers, which had by some means loosened themselves from their parent plant, like the male flowers of Vallisneria; and that other insects in process of time had been formed from these, some acquiring wings, others fins, and others claws, from their ceaseless efforts to procure food, or to secure themselves from injury. He contends that none of these changes are more incomprehensible than the transformation of caterpillars into butterflies. See Botanic Garden, vol. i. additional note 39.

Such are the absurdities, among many others, which the love of innovation in science induces men to adopt.

P. 43. l. 10. *In all creatures and in all vegetables, &c.*] The provision made for birds, to enable them to fly, in the strength of the muscles of the breast, &c. is a remarkable instance of Providence. Men and quadrupeds have no such provision. “Pectorales muscoli hominis flectentes
“ humeros, parvi et parum carnosii sunt; non æquant 50^{am}
“ aut 70^{am} partem omnium muscularum hominis: E
“ contra in avibus, pectorales muscoli vastissimi sunt, et
“ æquant, imo excedunt, et magis pendent quam reliqui
“ omnes muscoli ejus avis simul sumpti. Borel. de. Mot.
Animal. vol. i. prop. 184. See Derham’s Phys. Theol.

P. 44. l. 3. *But an argument, &c.*] What is thus called spontaneous vitality is perhaps only a variation of the process of nature, which after a given time returns to

its usual mode. Here is nothing spontaneous, that is independent of an established law. The aphides, it is said, of the spring season go on to produce nine successive generations of offspring; but the last again produce eggs for the winter, in which season the animal could not feed, and consequently could not exist. Now here let us follow the general analogy of nature. The lesser species of animals approach nearer to the vegetable race. In some plants there are three different modes of propagation; first by seed, next by scion or sucker, next by insertion, when the plant gains root by being set in the earth. There is indeed a fourth method, grafting or inoculation; but this is a sort of parasitical life, when life is sustained by adventitious roots, &c. Most of these however produce flowers, and those propagate and produce seeds, which are the eggs of the plants; so that these partial or temporary deviations are returned to the first principle; and this may be the constant process of the minuter species of animals. That a polypus should by separation or cutting become a perfect animal is exactly similar. There are temporary deviations, and a limited variety of process; but there is an unerring return to the same first law.

It is said that the green matter produced in water, as is proved by the experiments of Ingenhouz and Priestley, cannot but be spontaneous; and Darwin says of this and of animals, that it is unreasonable to suppose the former, or their eggs to abound in the air. See *Notes on the Temple of Nature*. This green matter, according to the same account, produces pure air. Why then should it be improbable that the eggs or parents should not abound in the air, or in water? Are there no substances existing, unless visible to us?

P. 50. l. 25. *The doctrine we mean to advance is, that there is nothing in nature fortuitous.*] Such, even in the

pagan world, was the opinion of Cleanthes, who asserted, according to Cicero, in adducing four causes which give birth to the idea of a God in the human mind, "Quar-
 "tam causam esse, eamque vel maximam, æquabilitatem
 "motus, conversionem cœli; solis, lunæ, siderumque om-
 "nium distinctionem, utilitatem, pulchritudinem, ordinem:
 "quarum rerum adspæctus ipse satis indicaret, *non esse ea*
 "*fortuita.* Ut si quis in domum aliquam, aut in gymna-
 "sium, aut in forum venerit, cum videat omnium rerum
 "rationem, modum, disciplinam, non possit ea sine causa
 "feri judicare, sed esse aliquem intelligat, qui præsit et
 "cui pareatur, &c." De Nat. Deor. lib. ii.

[P. 60. l. 1. *Every generation of animals can effect ex-
 actly as much as a preceding one, but no more.*] The first
 nest of a bird may not be so cautiously concealed as a fu-
 ture; but every bird of the same species builds, as all its
 predecessors have built, without variation or improve-
 ment. It is also remarkable, that all this is done without
 any opportunity of imitation; for birds, taken early from the
 parent nest, and kept in a state of confinement, when they
 first begin to build, act exactly as the rest of their kind.

[P. 60. l. 5. *Thus instincts never ripen, &c.*] The
 improvements sometimes evident in brutes are, enlarge-
 ments of their faculties, but not of their instincts, which
 are instantaneously impressed. But even to the enlarge-
 ment of these faculties there are limits. Thus a brute, by
 education, or by the instruction of man, may be taught
 to expand its own powers, as is constantly found in
 training animals for various purposes. Again, there are
 certain effects produced on animals' sagacity by expe-
 rience. They learn caution and vigilance by the acquired
 apprehension of danger: but all this dies with the indi-
 vidual. Nay, some are born with greater or less natural

abilities. But no improvement of the individual can be communicated to a successor, consequently there can be no advance to greater perfectibility in the organic system.

P. 66. l. 15. *We have a decided proof that all the phenomena of nature, &c.* Wollaston thus beautifully illustrates the necessity of the existence of a first Cause. "Suppose a chain hung down out of the heavens from an unknown height, and, though every link of it gravitated towards the earth, and what it hung upon was not visible, yet it did not descend, but kept its situation; and upon this a question should arise, what supported or kept up this chain: would it be a sufficient answer to say, that the first (or lowest) link hung upon the second, (or the next above it;) the second, or rather the first and second, upon the third, and so on. For what holds up the whole? A chain of ten links would fall down, unless something able to bear it hindered: one of twenty, if not staid by something of a yet greater strength in proportion to the increase of weight: and therefore one of infinite links certainly, if not sustained by something infinitely strong, and capable to bear up an infinite weight. And thus it is in a chain of causes and effects tending, or, as it were, gravitating towards some end. The last (or lowest) depends on, or (as one may say) is suspended upon the cause above it: this again, if it be not the first cause, is suspended as an effect upon something above it; and if they should be infinite, unless (agreeably to what has been said) there is some cause upon which all hang or depend, they would be an infinite effect without an efficient: and to assert there is any such thing, would be so great an absurdity, as to say, that a finite or little weight wants something to sustain it; but an infinite one, or the greater, does not." Wollaston's Religion of Nature, p. 67.

: P. 67. l. 16. *Did superior strength or superior cunning, &c.*] The laws to which brutes are unerringly subject are a remarkable proof of the constant operation of an overruling Providence. Instinct attaches each to its particular genus, but prevents it by some unknown principle from any deviation. Hence the genus is ever preserved, and nature is kept true to itself. The philosopher may say, that possibly there are mechanical principles which direct instinct, though not yet discovered by us. But the discovery of every instance of this kind would be a further manifestation of divine wisdom, and would evince the omnipotence of the Author of such an overruling and coercive power.

Another instance of providential design is, that influence which has subjected the brute creation to the dominion of man. Many animals, were they but conscious of their own powers, would make man the subject: but their knowledge is so confined, that in this respect only is man the superior. He is lord over all, not by superior sagacity, for in this most animals are his superiors; not by strength, for how very inferior are his muscular powers to those of many animals! It is by this principle; that animals, though possessing wonderful faculties of instinct, are subordinate. The individual possesses generally but one eminent instinct; and being void of speech, there can be no extensive communication of ideas; for ideas the brute creation certainly possess; there can be no union, no combination of faculties. It is not fear alone; for how difficult is it to tame the more ferocious! It is this limitation, which God has been pleased to fix to their extraordinary powers, that preserves effectually that law of subjection, by which these act in uniformity to his decree to man. "Have thou dominion over every living thing that moveth on the earth^a." It is by the mental

^a Gen. i. 28.

powers of analyzing and associating ideas, that man governs, that he controls superior strength, that he overreaches superior sagacity, and that he subjects powers far beyond his own. Now were it for a moment possible to suppose that second causes could contribute even to the production of an animated being, would there not be a necessity for other controlling causes to overrule them?

LECTURE III.

P. 73. l. 16. *While, happily, true philosophy, &c.*] It is further remarkable, that the historical books of Moses carry with them such authenticity as no profane records can boast. The earlier histories of the Pagan world, if they deserve that name, are so intermingled with fable, that they are unworthy of attention. Herodotus, the father of the Grecian history, has founded his narrative so much on romance, that in many parts it is incredible. Even Thucydides has not escaped the imputation of error. If then we find little that is authentic in the early records of refined nations, how are we to expect satisfaction in the fables of barbarous and ignorant people. Now the history of Moses extends far beyond the authentic history of all past ages; and his facts are more credible, because an adequate cause is assigned to every event which he records. For this seems to be one great criterion, on which the credibility of the Pentateuch is founded. When we are taught that the supreme Being, from motives of affection, is pleased to interfere in the affairs of mankind, and to interrupt the ordinary course of his providence for their immediate or ultimate good, cause and effect are adequate. That he who creates and governs nature should have power sufficient to arrest or alter its course, is undeniable. When we read of a miracle exerted for the advantage of the world, this is perfectly consistent with almighty goodness. But when we read of a miracle performed by

a Pagan deity for the gratification of a brutal appetite, and for that gratification alone, and from no regard for the welfare of men, the whole is incredible and incongruous, because human passions do not constitute the essence of divinity, and criminal enjoyments are injurious to mankind.

P. 78. l. 13. *It was supposed by ancient philosophers, &c.]* It is of the greatest importance for us to be assured, that in no respect the narration of the sacred historian is inconsistent with the principles of sound philosophy: for on a presumed error of this nature, the foundation of the Christian religion has been attempted to be shaken. Thus, because one writer, in giving the natural history of Egypt, from a mistaken computation of the ages of its different strata of soils, affirmed that the world was more ancient than the Jewish historian asserted, no small triumph was afforded to minute philosophers, until the fact was satisfactorily confuted. This able defence of the Mosaic account is contained in a work deservedly popular. See the Bishop of Landaff's Apology for the Bible.

"From the same fatal and deceitful source of reasoning," says another writer, "the Christian religion, whose genuine precepts and doctrines have sustained an ordeal of inquisition of ages, against which no system built upon false principles could have maintained itself even for a moment, this excellent dispensation, breathing forth glory to God, and peace and good will amongst men, was hastily rejected, because the population of America, and the casual properties of the natives of that country, could not be accounted for by men who had no other data whereon to reason except the imaginary extent of their own genius, together with an entire ignorance of the situation of that continent, and the nature of its inhabitants."

“ Even at this day, when these erroneous opinions have
 “ been effectually corrected by the advancement of hu-
 “ man knowledge, the truth of this amiable religion is
 “ again triumphantly called in question by modern sophists,
 “ because the creation of the world and its various pro-
 “ ductions, as related in the Jewish writings, do not accord
 “ precisely with the vague and desultory system of every
 “ idle theorist; because this stupendous work of Omnipot-
 “ ence cannot instantly be explained by principles crudely
 “ deduced from the transient and contracted analogies of
 “ a few speculative philosophers.

“ In truth, the elevated genius of Longinus, that illust-
 “ rious critic of Greece, had not a juster cause for admi-
 “ ration at the noble and sublime description of creation, as
 “ recorded in the Jewish writings, than rational philosophy
 “ may have at this day in tracing its accurate coincidence
 “ with such few facts as have come within the limited
 “ reach of human observation, on this admirable but in-
 “ comprehensible subject.”

“ The proximity of America to the continent of Asia
 “ is now perfectly ascertained by the British navigators,
 “ although the distance between these countries was stat-
 “ ed by theorists as amounting to an impassible gulph of
 “ some thousand miles. The confident assertion of modern
 “ philosophers, that its inhabitants were beardless, is, from
 “ many quarters, proved to be false (see Carver’s North
 “ America, Cook’s Voyages, Marsden’s Sumatra, &c.)
 “ And there is every reason for believing that the copper
 “ colour, and other peculiarities, are altogether the effect
 “ of climate, since in exposed situations the progeny of the
 “ Europeans has been found to suffer considerable altera-
 “ tions in these circumstances during the course of those
 “ few generations which have passed since their first esta-
 “ blishment on that continent: in these instances there-
 “ fore revealed religion, so far from apprehending danger

"By the discovery of truth, and the improvement of human knowledge, has only suffered from the ignorance or mis-information of philosophers." Hamilton's Letters, and note on the passage.

"If we look again into the records that give an account of ancient times; nay, if we peruse the fictions of the poets, we shall find not the least footsteps of any thing exceeding the received opinion of the time of the world's beginning. Now it is very wonderful, that, if the world was eternal, we should have no history of above three thousand years standing; nay even that Greece itself, in so many myriads of ages, should offer us nothing of this kind until the time of Herodotus and Thucydides; and Egypt, the school of Greece not long before, should know nothing but a little romantic chronology, and some mystical hieroglyphics.

"Had the race of men been from everlasting, or even as old as the Chaldeans and Egyptians make it, how should it come to pass that the invention of poetry should find no actions worthy in heroic verse before the Trojan or Theban war, or the famed adventure of the Argonauts? For whatsoever the muses (those daughters of memory) rehearsed before those times is nothing else but the creation of the world, and the nativity of their gods. Were there from all eternity no memorable actions done till about this time? Or had mankind no way, till of late, to record and propagate them to posterity? It is much, that if men were from eternity, they should not in all that duration find out the way of writing. Writing, it must be owned, is no easy invention: It is the representation of an image, or the picture of another representation, (for as letters are the representation of words, so words are the representation of thoughts,) and therefore it required no small penetration to devise a method of doing this; but then that,

"among so many millions of ingenious men, in so many millions of ages, an invention even more difficult than this should be happily hit on, and successfully pursued, is no wonderful thing at all.

"If we look into arts and sciences, whether such as be useful or ornamental to human life, we shall find their invention and origin too late to give any sanction to the world's eternity." Stackhouse's Body of Divinity.

P. 84. l. 18. *Now idolatry was not only dishonourable to the reason of man, &c.*] It has been affirmed by one infidel writer, "that the religion of the heathens consisted in nothing but morality and festivals; morality, common to all men; and festivals, which were no more than times of rejoicing, and could not be of prejudice to mankind." This is a false statement of facts: the grossness of idolatry was such, that Orpheus reckoned as many gods as there were days in the year. In the time of Herod, the Greeks had no less than thirty thousand divinities. The Romans, in the times of Varro, had three hundred Jupiters; the same god under different titles and names, and with different powers. Some have reckoned no less than two hundred and eighty thousand gods. Now the worship of these deities consisted in the most gross acts of indecency. How then should these festivals be harmless in their tendency? As to their morality, it formed no part of their religion. All the religion of the Pagan world were mere forms and ceremonies. Their festivals were calculated rather for the diversion and relaxation of the people, in which morals were not considered. These resembled the festivals of the church of Rome in after ages, in which the Sundays were days of licensed sport. Nay, once in our own history there were public ordinances for sports on the sabbath; and to refuse partaking of them was considered a species of disaffection. How different was the sabbath appointed

by God in the Mosaic institution ! How different was the sabbath observed by our blessed Saviour himself, and afterwards established and observed with pure and holy rites by his immediate followers, and the earlier Christians ! It must be great prejudice not to see the superior purity and divinity of all the institutions decreed by revelation. In all the Jewish institutions we discover nothing unworthy the worship of a God of purity and holiness ; all is dignified and worthy of his nature, and the sabbath of Christians is the devotion of soul ; it is intercourse with God of the most exalted kind, and worship due to him even in our present state, nor can the veil of flesh separate us entirely from him, for even while in the body, we thus enjoy an intellectual presence with God.

LECTURE IV.

P. 109. l. 7. *No religion that has obtained any influence, &c].* Now though every principle of benevolence is so evident in this scheme, yet it has been unaccountably urged against the system of Christianity, that it rather tends to discourage patriotism, as well as private friendship, by this precept of universal benevolence, which is said to absorb all particular interests. But this is a gross error; for universal love embraces every individual. The whole includes every part. Nothing is more evident, than that private friendship is sanctioned and encouraged by the example of our Lord himself, in the instance of the beloved disciple; in his attachment to Lazarus and his sisters; in his choice of the twelve; in his selection of disciples. In truth, the law of general benevolence is not that of perfect equality; for all cannot be supposed to merit love in the same proportion. It is like the light of the sun, which cannot equally affect all bodies, but which operates in proportion to recipient qualities. It is always active; but, while it communicates cheerfulness to many, there are some of so gloomy a complexion, that they cannot be enlivened. The love of our country, and private affection, are parts of Christian charity. He who loves every man must love his friend; but reason and justice will teach us how to proportion our love, and with what measure to distribute it. The Christian law says, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, and do unto all as thou wouldst be done unto;*" that is, in similar circumstances.

This then seems a rule of justice, rather than of affection; affection is indeed the motive, but justice is the measure; and while a man may love another, in this sense, as well as himself, he may love a relative or a friend still better than himself, by sacrificing his own advantages for their profit. Again, if by patriotism be meant, that blind attachment to political relations, which is to supersede justice and morality, this indeed the Christian religion does not inculcate, and cannot encourage; for this would be to violate truth, the great attribute of God, and the characteristic of our religion. But if we are to understand a fervent attachment to our nation, rather than to strangers, where no duty of justice is violated, this the Christian religion allows in common with all virtues. For our religion is an encouragement, not a violation of any natural affections; and this bias of the mind is nowhere disallowed. He who loves mankind, in general must love his country. But religion never recommends the love of the wicked; and if strangers violate justice, or offer injury, or prefer their own particular interests to the detriment of our own country, they fall under the description of the unjust, and consequently cannot deserve affection. For it must be remembered, that reason is to be the guide of our affections; and we are never by Scripture advised to act contrary to its determinations. God has given us ardent feelings; he has inculcated a wide diffusion of our light; but always under the direction of reason.

P. 110. l. 20. *Parents commonly love their children, &c.]*

Πᾶς γὰρ τὸ οἰκῶν ἔργον ἀγαπᾷ μᾶλλον, ἢ ἀγαπᾷ τὴν αὐτοῦ τῆς ἑγῶς, ἐμψύχου γενομένης. Arist. Ethic. Nicom. lib. ix.

P. 114. l. 5. *Yet here ungrateful and fullen infidelity, &c.]* We are asked, if the tidings of salvation were necessary to be proclaimed, why were they not promulgated to

the earlier ages of mankind? We answer, it was ever intimated by the suggestions of reason, by patriarchal tradition, by prophecy, by all the gradual means of disclosure. Men were never without such natural light as the Almighty thought fit to dispense, and by that natural light they are finally to be judged. But do we reason thus respecting the discovery of natural knowledge? Do we say, why was the wonderful power of the magnet so long hidden from past ages? Why were men suffered to remain so long without the means of communicating with each other, and dispersing the bounties of the earth by commerce, and of communicating knowledge to each other? No, we must be content with the result, and we ought to be thankful for the goodness and gifts of God. For what we all discover is in all probability knowledge communicated to us from Heaven by natural means. We term it accidental discovery or invention. But let us inquire how many unforeseen and fortuitous circumstances conduce to discovery, and we shall be led to conclude, that some influence more than mortal may set these unforeseen circumstances in train. We know not what accident may exactly mean. Sometimes it is the result of an unexpected circumstance, sometimes the opposition of one against another, like the meeting of contrary currents in the tides; sometimes the concurrence of a few or many causes, and sometimes the effect of some cause directly opposite to the first intention. Accident is a term of vague meaning, by which we express any unexpected event. But what we think to be accidental may be the result of a train or combination of predisposed causes; to us irregular, to divine Prescience perfectly regular. Now all the greatest of human discoveries or inventions have been the result of accident; of something never sought for or intended by the inventor, but which has arisen unexpectedly while the mind has been engaged in a very fo-

reign pursuit. Invention therefore seems to have been a ready power of seizing circumstances, of pursuing an unexpected light, and following instantaneously a new train of ideas, just as in the practical act of the painter, an accidental felicity of touch has suggested an idea to the eye of genius, never designed, but which produces the most admirable effect by its conversion to a new purpose. There is perhaps no such thing as invention by a train of ideas which can regularly be traced. This is more applicable to the improvement than the invention of art. Now the discovery of the magnetic powers, or of the efficacy of some method by which disease may be healed, and other blessings, are undoubtedly the secret agency of Heaven; and what good, what pious mind is there, that would not cherish the idea, that the secret interposition of Providence may produce such or such results from unexpected combinations. In the political world we know that these accidents produce mighty convulsions, overturn kingdoms of long duration, and subvert plans long digested by the prudence and the artifice of man.

P. 114. l. 10. *The answer must be, that it is impossible for finite reason, &c.*] To those who object to revelation, because the doctrines are mysterious, it is proper to remark, that this in a great measure is an argument in its support. Were the declarations of revelation altogether plain and free from mystery, they might be opposed as the mere inventions of man. For since all the procedure of God in his plan of creation abounds in mystery, it must of consequence follow, that his moral government is of the same nature.

There is therefore an analogy in all the operations of the Almighty. If we cannot account for the production of an animal or a plant, and yet see that animals and plants are regularly produced, are we to suppose that God

does not operate by mysterious means in his still more exalted schemes of providence? Are we to refuse assent, because his thoughts are not our thoughts, or his ways our ways? The supreme Being is unsearchable. God is light; but the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. We must be content with such declarations as he is pleased to make. But when we reason on his decrees, we make that appear little which in itself is great, and bring religion, the supreme, the first, and the last good, into contempt. This is to supply the scorner with objects to which he may direct his sarcasm, and ensure his success.

- P. 116. l. 26. *Whoever attentively and impartially peruses them, &c.*] Bishop Stillingfleet, in shewing that the Scriptures were delivered in an uniform and agreeable manner, remarks, "that this is not sufficient of itself to prove the Scriptures to be divine, because all men do not contradict themselves in their writings; but yet there are some peculiar circumstances to be considered, in the agreeableness of the parts of Scripture to each other, which are not to be found in mere human writings."

"1st. That this doctrine was delivered by persons who lived in different ages and times from each other. Usually one age corrects another's faults; and we are apt to pity the ignorance of our predecessors, when, it may be, our posterity may think us as ignorant as we do them. But in the sacred Scripture we read not one age condemning another; we find light still increasing in the series of times in Scriptures, but no reflections in any time upon the ignorance or weakness of the precedent; the dimmest light was sufficient for its age, and was a step to further discovery. Quintilian gives it as the reason of the great uncertainty of grammar rules,

'Quia non analogia dimissa cœlo formam loquendi dedit.'

"That which he wanted as to grammar, we have as to divine truths; they are delivered from heaven, and therefore are always uniform and agreeable to each other.

"2nd. By persons of different interests in the world. God made choice of men of all ranks to be inditers of his oracles, to make it appear it was no matter of state policy or particular interest which was contained in his word, which persons of such different interests could not have agreed in as they do. We have Moses, David, Solomon, persons of royal rank and quality; and can it be any mean thing which these think it their glory to be penners of? We have Isaiah, Daniel, and other persons of the highest education and accomplishments; and can it be any trivial thing which these employ themselves in? We have Amos, and other prophets in the Old Testament, and the Apostles in the New, of the meaner sort of men in the world; yet all these join in concert together; when God tunes the spirits, all agree in the same strain of divine truths, and give light and harmony to each other.

"3rd. By persons in different places and conditions; some in prosperity in their own country, some under banishment and adversity, yet all agreeing in the same substance of doctrine; of which no alteration we see was made either for the flattery of those in power, or for avoiding miseries and calamities. And under all the different dispensations before, under, and after the law, though the management of things was different, yet the doctrine and design was for substance the same in all. All the different dispensations agree in the same common principles of religion; the same ground of acceptance with God, and obligation to duty was common to all, though the peculiar instances wherein God was served might be different, according to the ages of

“growth in the church of God. So that this great uniformity considered in these circumstances, is an argument that these things came originally from the same Spirit, though conveyed through different instruments to the knowledge of the world.” Origines Sacrae, book iii. chap. 6.

P. 118. l. 13. *It is only proposed at present to observe, &c.*] The strict observance of local circumstances in the New Testament is a strong evidence of its truth. There is a remarkable coincidence of this kind in the account of the denial of Peter. It is said, that as he stood by the fire in the hall, and warmed himself, a damsel observed him, and recognized his person. The natural warmth of a country situated in the latitude of Judea, might induce us to suppose that a fire could not have been necessary at that season of the year, and consequently to suspect misapplication of costume in the writers; but it appears from the evidence of modern travellers, that at this season of the year severe cold is experienced in Palestine. Many of the allusions of our Lord himself are equally in strict conformance with the customs and manners of the inhabitants of Judaea. See Harmer.

P. 120. l. 7. *But when human genius is employed, &c.*] The Grecian poets had no prototypes, or materials, from whence to give dignity to such subjects; and though aided by the sublime descriptions of holy writ, yet the great Poet of our nation falls beneath himself, when he has occasion, in his immortal work, to introduce the Almighty, or the Son of the Highest, conversing on the transcendent scheme of redemption. He who could so finely describe the pride of rebellious and fallen spirits, or so exquisitely paint the sweetness of ministering angels; he who could so greatly picture the warring host of

heaven, if we allow for some defects naturally arising from metaphysical indistinctness, can never reach the sublimity of the Hebrew poetry, or give sufficient grandeur to his subjects on such occasions.

P. 121. l. 27. *How shall we be able to sum up the many exemplifications of excellence, &c.* Under all the perfections to which our Lord was exposed, and amid all the insults from persons in authority, it is to be observed, that he never retaliated; but constantly recommended submission to those who were in power. This could not arise from timidity, or from a desire to court protection, because we always read that he openly and boldly condemned the immoral conduct, and the deception of the Scribes and Pharisees; reprehending their superstitious perversion and misinterpretation of the Mosaic scriptures. He severely reprimands them for oppression, and for imposing burdens on the consciences of men, which they themselves, to use his own emphatic expression, would not lift a finger to bear. Now, whoever considers the true sublimity of the Christian doctrines, and comprehends their ultimate object, must understand how infinitely inferior all temporal considerations are, when put in competition with the concerns of a better world. Those doctrines therefore look to temporal life only, as far as it may serve to increase the kingdom of righteousness, and to purify the soul. It was therefore not the design of a Saviour, and instructor in heavenly things, to interfere with the mutable and local laws of temporal government, or the changes of empires. Yet these are indeed objects of a divine Providence. They are not disregarded by him, who now sitteth on the right hand of God, in power and great glory. But his commission, while on earth, was to withdraw our attention from this world, and to raise in us higher views; and while we are

inspired with sentiments truly Christian, submission to just and legal authority, like all other branches of justice, will be fully impressed on our minds, and be a rule of our conduct. Submission to legal authority, is then not only a political, but a moral and a Christian virtue. He can neither possess a celestial or good frame of mind, who is turbulent or factious, or a disturber of the public tranquillity. The just man will only resist illegal oppression; but will on all occasions, where he can conscientiously do so, submit himself to every ordinance of man; not only for conscience, but for the Lord's sake. No duties are prescribed to us by Jesus Christ but such as have a tendency to purify the heart, and to prepare us for a better and a more permanent state: and the virtues of a good citizen, like other moral duties, serve to qualify us for this better state; by the practice of justice, temperance, fidelity and meekness, patience and rectitude. However conducive to immediate, or local, or temporal convenience modes of government may be, it is clear that no precepts can apply but such as are general; and that it would be useless, and an inconceivable labour, to lay down instruction for conduct in all these complicated, varying, and mutable occasions. These consequently are too fluctuating, and too comparatively insignificant, to require minute detail from him, who came to teach in the more important government of our passions; to direct us in the way to everlasting life, and to raise our thoughts to a kingdom not of this world.

P. 124. l. 5. *So astonishing are the proofs of his power, &c.*] In the very moment in which men forsake the clear and direct road of evidence, and venture on the boundless ocean of conjecture, they lose sight of truth; all is then confusion and mystery. Of this the numerous and absurd errors of the earlier ages of Christianity are a

proof. The Grecian philosophers could not reconcile the Christian doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to their systems, and therefore endeavoured to render them comprehensible. Praxeas, a man of genius and learning, began to propagate these vague explications at Rome, and was severely persecuted for the errors they maintained. He denied any real distinction between the Persons of the Trinity. Hence his followers were called Monarchians and Patropassians, because they believed, according to Tertullian, that the Father was so intimately united with the man Christ his son, that he suffered with him in all his passion, in the miseries of his life, and the pains and ignominy of his death.

On the other hand, the schools of oriental philosophy, supposing that the divine nature could not be capable of human suffering, attributed to Christ, not a real, but a celestial and aerial body, which was apparently, but not substantially crucified. Of this opinion was one Bardesanes, and others. See Mosheim.

LECTURE V.

P. 137. l. 20. *But the same remark may be made on both, &c.*] Now let us see what the nature of human confederacy must have been, to have effected such a continuance as the consistent establishment of Christianity; how utterly impossible the agreement of the actions, and how miraculous if successful; for nothing less than miracles could have ensured success. That traditional intimations of the will of God were known to very early ages, is undoubted; that after this period prophecies were promulgated, is incontrovertible. Those prophecies foretold future events, which could not be suspected by the prophets as probably about to happen; for it is now an established truth, that the predictions were antecedent to the events. We see the several and successive prophets not desirous of acquiring posthumous fame by independent reputation, because they rested all their predictions on the foundation that had been laid by others. Thus, for instance, Moses announced the God of Abraham. Isaiah, and other of the major prophets, and after them the minor, independently establish by their predictions a religious system not of their own invention. They proclaimed the religion of their predecessors, of Abraham, and of Moses, so that they relied on a concatenation, of which they were only separate links. They consented to act subordinate parts. The same is observable of all the agents of divine Providence in the system of revelation,

whether prophets or kings, whether legislators or priests, whether great men or obscure. Our blessed Redeemer, with a peculiar humility, rested all the evidence of his mission on the foundation thus predisposed, and assumed no reputation for himself: all he did, or said, was for the glory of the Father. We next see the Apostles resting on the same foundation, nay, even risking life, and braving persecution, for the reputation of their crucified Master, and for the glory of God; risking all for a reputation, which, if that had been the motive, could only have been subordinate. I shall not in this place insist on the little probability of success they could have, and what dangers they encountered in the endeavour.

Let us next see what a wonderful concurrence of events contributed to all these extraneous, as well as connected circumstances. Did Alexander pursue his course of mad ambition to fulfil the prophecies of Daniel; or did the great actors of the Roman history contribute their efforts to the production of this extraordinary completion of prophecy? Little did Cyrus, or did Alexander, or any of the heathen instruments of a divine Providence, suspect that they were the agents of uncontrollable events; events since known to have been produced by the secret and irresistible councils of God. If then all the most important occurrences of human life, if nature itself unite in the completion of such a scheme, so long before proclaimed, so repeatedly and regularly published and expanded, it seems difficult to understand how such evidence can be rejected.

P. 144. l. 5. *Thus the arcana of sacred and profane history, &c.*] “ Besides these prophecies concerning our Saviour Christ, there are others contained in the Scriptures, concerning the fates and successions of the chief kingdoms, empires and polities of the world; as of the rise of the Persian monarchy; of its fall and conquest

“ by the Macedonian Alexander; of the quadripartite
 “ division of this Greekish empire after Alexander’s death;
 “ of the succession of the Seleucidæ and Lagidæ, a pro-
 “ phetic history so agreeable with the events, that it
 “ was by Porphyrius pretended to have been written after
 “ them; and lastly, of the rise and continuance of the Ro-
 “ man empire. For, notwithstanding the endeavours of
 “ some to pervert all those Scripture prophecies that ex-
 “ tend to the present times, it is clearly demonstrable,
 “ that this was Daniel’s fourth ten horned beast, or
 “ the legs and toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, that
 “ fourth empire strong as iron; which came at length to
 “ be broken or divided into ten or many principalities,
 “ called in the prophetic language, and according to the
 “ Eickon, horns; amongst whom was to start up,
 “ another horn with eyes, speaking great words against
 “ the Most High, and making war with the saints, and
 “ prevailing against them for a time, times, and half a
 “ time. Which prophecy of Daniel’s is the ground work
 “ of St. John’s Apocalypse, it being there further insisted
 “ upon, filled up and enlarged with the addition of several
 “ particulars; so that both Daniel and John have each of
 “ them, from their respective ages, set down a prophetic
 “ calendar of times, in a continued series, (the former
 “ more compendiously and generally, the latter more
 “ copiously and particularly,) to the very end of the
 “ world.

“ And thus do we see plainly, that the Scripture pro-
 “ phecies evince a Deity; neither can these possibly be
 “ imputed by Atheists, as other things, to men’s fear and
 “ fancy, nor yet to the fiction of politicians. Nor do
 “ they only evince a Deity, but confirm Christianity also;
 “ partly as predicted by them in its several circumstances,
 “ a grand one whereof was the Gentiles’ reception of it;
 “ and partly as itself predicting future events, this Spirit

“ of prophecy being the testimony of Jesus. Both which
 “ Scripture prophecies, of Christ in the Old Testament,
 “ and from him in the New, are of equal, if not greater
 “ force to us in the present age, for the confirmation of
 “ our faith, than the miracles themselves recorded in the
 “ Scripture; we having now certain knowledge ourselves
 “ of many of these events, and being no way able to sus-
 “ pect, but that the prophecies were written long before.”
 Cudworth's Intellectual System of the Universe, p. 714.

P. 146. l. 3. *The perverse and determined infidel, &c.*]
 In reasoning on the decrees of God, we are not to expect
 a solution of all difficulties. All that we have to consider
 is, whether they be consistent with each other. Are his
 proceedings, as far as they are revealed, conformable with
 his promise? If we perceive a successive chain of events
 tending to the same purpose, we see the progress of ful-
 filment. We have no right to demand the reasons of his
 procedure, because it is perfectly consonant to our idea
 of his attributes of perfect wisdom, and goodness, and
 power, to conceive that we are incompetent to understand
 them. We have no right to demand the reasons, because
 it is all free gift and grace on the part of God. We are to
 accept with humility. It is reasonable to suppose, that
 we cannot comprehend infinite wisdom. For can that
 which is infinite be commensurate to ours? We must ac-
 cept the gift as we should from the unlimited power of
 an earthly potentate. It is material for us to observe, that
 the promised advantages go on progressively towards com-
 pletion; but to inquire into the reason of the bounty is
 only gratifying to an unprofitable curiosity. It might
 indeed amuse us, but it could not advance the fulfilment.

Neither ought we to doubt of the consistence of the
 great scheme of Providence, from the apparent disagree-
 ment of a few parts. This happens in all the works and

the ways of God Almighty. In the planetary system, there are what we, from the imperfection of our apprehension, call anomalies. These are probably only anomalies to our finite apprehensions. They may be a consistent part of the whole grand scheme. Yet do these affect that whole? Is the uniformity of the planetary laws in general affected by these apparent deviations? Pursue the inquiry throughout all the operations of divine skill, and we shall find a few deviations in every part; in the constitution of the human frame; in the constitution of animals; yet these do not destroy the uniformity of the whole. We cannot account for some of the Mosaic institutions; we cannot comprehend some of the declarations of our blessed Lord. In the Scriptures there are some things hard to be understood; but shall weak men wrest these to their own destruction? Is the general harmony destroyed by these comparatively little deviations? Nature travaileth in pain for grace and pardon; for reconciliation. Pardon and grace are promised, and the means of reconciliation are appointed. Shall we not accept them? Shall we refuse the bounty because the ground and motives of grace are not fully explained? Shall we resolve to perish everlastingly, because we are disputatious and doubtful? Shall the criminal refuse pardon, because he has not been fully made to understand all the motives, all the combination of sentiments, which awakened the compassion of the Power, which gratuitously offers the pardon?

LECTURE VII.

P. 190. l. 19. *We next come to an article, &c.*] “The
“ reformers made it the chief subject of their books and
“ sermons, to persuade people to believe in Christ, and
“ not in the Church, and made great use of those places
“ in which it was said, that Christians are justified by
“ faith only : though some explained this in such a man-
“ ner, that it gave their adversaries advantages to charge
“ them, that they denied the necessity of good works ;
“ but they all taught, that though they were not necessary
“ to justification, yet they were necessary to salvation.
“ They differed also (from the Papists) in their notion of
“ good works : the church of Rome taught, that the ho-
“ nour done to God in his images, or to the saints in
“ their shrines and relics, or to the priests, were the best
“ sort of good works : whereas the reformers pressed jus-
“ tice and mercy most, and discovered the superstition of
“ the other. The opinion of the merit of good works
“ was also so highly raised, that many thought they pur-
“ chased heaven by them. This the reformers did also
“ correct, and taught the people to depend merely upon
“ the death and intercession of Christ. Others moved
“ subtler questions ; as, whether obedience was an essential
“ part of faith, or only a consequent of it : this was a
“ nicety scarce becoming divines, that built only on the
“ simplicity of the Scriptures, and condemned the subtle-
“ ties of the schools ; and it was said that men of ill lives
“ abused this doctrine, and thought, if they could but af-

“sure themselves that Christ died for them, they were
“safe enough. So now, when they settled the notion of
“faith, they divided it into two sorts : the one was a
“persuasion of the truth of the Gospel, but the other
“carried with it a submission to the will of God ; and
“both hope, love, and obedience, belonged to it ; which
“was the faith professed in baptism, and so much extolled
“by St. Paul. It was not to be so understood, as if it
“were a certainty of our being predestinated, which may
“be only a presumption ; since all God’s promises are
“made to us on conditions ; but it was an entire receiving
“the whole Gospel according to our baptismal vows.
“Cranmer took great pains to state this matter right ;
“and made a large collection of many places, all written
“with his own hand, both out of ancient and modern
“authors, concerning faith, justification, and the merit of
“good works ; and concluded with this : That our jus-
“tification was to be ascribed only to the merits of Christ ;
“and that those who are justified must have charity as
“well as faith, but that neither of these was the merito-
“rious cause of justification.” Burnett’s Abridgement,
“A. D. 1540. There is much to the same purpose in his
History of the Reformation in the same year. See the
Bishop of Lincoln’s Refutation of Calvinism, where this
subject is fully discussed.

LECTURE VIII.

P. 196. l. 5. *Now there are no terms more misrepresented, &c.]* Enthusiasts make no distinction between different kinds of faith; neither are their conceptions on the subject clear or defined. The faith on which they so much insist, is a species of inspiration; a mere illumination of the mind. Now faith, in the true Scripture signification, is a faith of works. It is like the principle of action and reaction. Thus the instances recorded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xi. are all of this kind. The faith of Abraham was exhibited by his readiness to perform an act, which has been objected against by unbelievers. The command to sacrifice his son Isaac, they say, was inconsistent with the goodness of God. Admit this for a moment, and do we not perceive that the confidence expressed by Abraham, the trust he reposed in the promises of the Almighty, was the more meritorious on this very principle, because it appeared in a distrustful shape. But objectors are to remember, that it was a trial, and therefore not objectionable, because the act was prevented by the interposition of an angel. Now what was the nature of this instance of faith; was it mere confidence? No; it was obedience. It was a work. He was to believe, and to act on that belief. He was satisfied with the evidence of the command, and he was ready to prove his faith by performance. The faith of Moses, and others enumerated in the same chapter, were all of this kind. What was the faith of the prophets who are there described,

who "had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; who were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; and of whom the world was not worthy?" All these instances are absolute proofs of the necessity of good works.

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